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Agatha Christie

APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH

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Agatha Christie's first novel was published in 1920. It featured Hercule Poirot, the Belgian detective who has become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. Collins has published Agatha Christie since 1926.

This series has been especially created for readers worldwide whose first language is not English. Each story has been shortened, and the vocabulary and grammar simplified to make it accessible to readers with a good intermediate knowledge of the language.

The following features are included after the story:

A List of characters to help the reader identify who is who, and how they are connected to each other. **Cultural notes** to explain historical and other references. **A Glossary** of words that some readers may not be familiar with are explained. There is also a **Recording** of the story.

Agatha Christie

Appointment with Death

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Part I

Chapter 1

'Don't you agree that she's got to be killed?' The words seemed to hang in the still night air, before disappearing into the darkness.

It was Hercule Poirot's first night in the city of Jerusalem, and he was shutting his hotel-room window – the night air was a danger to his health! – when he overheard these words. He smiled. 'Even on holiday, I am reminded of crime,' he said to himself. 'No doubt someone is talking about a play or a book.'

As he walked over to his bed, he thought about the voice he had heard. It was the voice of a man – or a boy – and had sounded nervous and excited. 'I will remember that voice,' said Hercule Poirot to himself, as he lay down to sleep. 'Yes, I will remember.'

In the room next door, Raymond Boynton and his sister Carol looked out of their window into the dark-blue night sky. Raymond said again, 'Don't you agree that she's got to be killed? It can't go on like this – it can't. We must do something – and what else can we do?'

Carol said in a hopeless voice, 'If only we could just leave somehow! But we can't – we can't.'

'People would say we were crazy,' said Raymond bitterly. 'They would wonder why we can't just walk out –'

Carol said slowly, 'Perhaps we *are* crazy!'

'Perhaps we are,' agreed Raymond. 'After all, we are calmly planning to kill our own mother!'

'She isn't our real mother!' said Carol. 'She's our stepmother!'

There was a pause. 'Do you still think she has to die?' asked Raymond quietly.

'Yes, I do,' said Carol. 'She's mad – she must be. She – she wouldn't treat us so badly, torture us like this if she wasn't mad. It's lasted for years and years, and I don't think it will ever stop. We keep saying, "She'll die some time" – but she hasn't died! I don't think she will *ever* die, unless –'

'Unless we kill her,' said Raymond. 'And you or I must do it – not our brother Lennox, or our sister Ginevra. They mustn't be involved.'

'And we must do it quickly,' said Carol, 'I'm really worried about Ginevra – she's getting worse.'

'And it's not really wrong,' said Raymond. 'It's just like killing a mad dog, before it hurts anyone else.'

Carol stood up suddenly, pushing back her red-brown hair from her face. 'But we would still be sent to prison if we were found out. How could we explain what mother is like? It would sound crazy – as if we were imagining it.'

'Nobody will know,' said Raymond. 'I've got a plan. We'll be safe.'

'Ray,' said Carol, 'you're different in some way. Something's happened to you. Was it that girl you met on the train?'

'No, of course not,' said Raymond. 'Carol, don't talk nonsense. Let's talk about my plan.'

'Are you sure it will work?' asked Carol.

'Yes, I am,' replied her brother. 'We must wait for the right opportunity, of course. And then – we'll all be free.'

'Free?' Carol looked up at the stars. Then suddenly she started to cry. 'It's such a lovely night, with the stars in the sky. If only we could be part of it all, like other people. But instead we are

strange and twisted and wrong. Even if mother dies – isn't it too late for us to change?'

'No, Carol, it's not too late,' said Raymond. 'But if you don't want to –'

'I do want to – we must do it,' said Carol. 'Because of the others – and especially Ginevra. We must save Ginevra!'

Raymond paused a moment. 'All right, we'll do it,' he said. 'I'll tell you my plan.'

Chapter 2

Miss Sarah King was standing in the lounge of the Solomon Hotel in Jerusalem, looking at the newspapers and magazines, when a tall middle-aged Frenchman entered the room and walked towards her. Sarah looked up and smiled, as she recognized the man who had helped her carry her suitcases at Cairo railway station. The Frenchman introduced himself as Dr Theodore Gerard.

'Dr Theodore Gerard?' Sarah's eyes opened wide in surprise. 'Oh! I'm so excited to meet you. I've just qualified as a doctor myself, and I've read all your books. Your opinions on mental illness and schizophrenia are very interesting.'

'I was just going to order some coffee,' Dr Gerard smiled, amused at the girl's enthusiasm. 'Will you join me, Miss –?'

'King. My name is Sarah King.'

They sat down in the lounge and Dr Gerard ordered some coffee. 'Are you staying in Jerusalem long?' he asked, admiring Sarah's beautiful black hair and red lips.

'Just for a few days,' said Sarah. 'Then I want to go to the famous rose-red city of Petra – it's carved into the rock, I believe, and I think it takes about a week to get there and back.'

'Aha! I too was thinking of visiting Petra, if I have time,' said Dr Gerard.

Just then a group of people entered the lounge and sat down. Sarah looked at them with interest. 'Do you see that family of Americans?' she asked Dr Gerard quietly. 'They were on the same train from Cairo as us.'

Dr Gerard looked at the family. First he saw a tall man of about thirty, with a pleasant-looking face. Then he saw a good-looking younger boy and girl – obviously brother and sister – who both looked nervous and excited. There was another girl

who was even younger – she was beautiful, with red-gold hair – and another woman, who was young and calm, with dark hair and a pale face. But at the centre of the group there was an old woman – with a large, swollen body. Dr Gerard thought she looked like a huge spider in the middle of a web!

'Who are they?' Dr Gerard asked Sarah.

'The family name is Boynton,' Sarah replied. 'There is the mother, married son, his wife, one younger son and two younger daughters. They all seem very strange. They don't speak to anyone else, and they don't do anything unless the old woman – the mother – says so. They look so scared – so afraid of her. It's not right!'

'Have you spoken to them?' Dr Gerard asked.

'I spoke to the younger son on the train,' said Sarah. 'It was peculiar. He was very excited to speak to me – but also afraid. He's at least twenty three or four, but he seems very young. It isn't normal.'

Dr Gerard smiled. 'Is anyone really "normal"?' he asked.

Just then the younger son, Raymond Boynton, passed Sarah's chair as he fetched a magazine. Sarah looked up at him and asked, 'Have you been sightseeing today?'

Raymond jumped nervously and his face went red. 'Oh – oh, yes, certainly. I –' Then suddenly – as if a needle had been stuck into him – he hurried back to his family. The old woman, Mrs Boynton, held out a hand for the magazine and turned her head to look at Sarah. The old woman's face had no expression, and it was impossible to know what she was thinking.

But Sarah was looking at her watch. 'I must go, I'm afraid, Dr Gerard. I must write some letters. Thank you so much for the coffee.' The doctor stood up and shook Sarah's hand. 'Perhaps I will see you again, at Petra,' he said.

Sarah smiled at him and started to walk out of the lounge. Mrs Boynton stared hard at her son Raymond, and as Sarah passed, Raymond turned his head away from her, slowly and unwillingly. It was as if Mrs Boynton had pulled a string that no one could see.

Sarah King noticed that Raymond had turned away from her, and was very annoyed. She knew that she was an attractive young woman, and she didn't like being ignored. 'I won't waste time talking to him again,' she said to herself, as she went upstairs to her hotel room.

Instead of writing her letters, Sarah sat down in front of her bedroom mirror. While she combed her lovely black hair, she thought about her life.

Things had been difficult for Sarah recently. She had been engaged to be married to another young doctor, but a month ago she had decided to end the engagement. Though they were very attracted to each other, they both liked to be in charge and in control – and had argued all the time! It had been a hard decision for Sarah, and to help her forget her troubles she had arranged this interesting holiday before she went back to work.

Sarah sighed, and forced herself to think about the present, not the past. 'I hope I meet Dr Gerard again,' she thought. 'I'd like to talk to him about his work.' Then she thought about Raymond Boynton. It was ridiculous for anyone – especially a man! – to be controlled by their mother. Suddenly she felt sorry for him.

'That young man needs to be rescued,' she said out loud. 'And I'm going to do it!'

Chapter 3

After Sarah left the lounge, Dr Gerard moved and sat nearer to the Boynton family. He was curious about them and wanted to look at them more closely from a professional point of view, as a doctor. He pretended to read a newspaper, while looking at each of the family in turn. Dr Gerard had guessed that Raymond Boynton and Sarah were attracted to each other, so first he looked at Raymond. The young man looked sensitive and clever. 'But why,' thought Dr Gerard, 'is he so nervous and excited?'

Raymond's sister Carol was also nervous. She kept moving in her chair and looking around her, as if she couldn't relax. 'And she is afraid,' decided Dr Gerard. 'Yes, she is afraid! But why?'

The Boynton family's conversation – about the tourist sights they would visit tomorrow – sounded normal. But Dr Gerard thought that their words were hiding something. Underneath the surface there was some other emotion – though he didn't know what that emotion was.

Next Dr Gerard looked at the elder brother, whose name was Lennox. Lennox didn't seem to be as nervous as Raymond and Carol. Instead he looked very tired – exhausted. He didn't seem to care about anything. Dr Gerard was reminded of people he had seen in hospital. 'He is exhausted – yes, exhausted with suffering,' thought the doctor. 'Now he just waits, waits for the end to come.'

Finally he looked at the youngest daughter – the girl with the red-gold hair. She was about nineteen, with a thin, beautiful face. She was sitting very still, and smiling calmly at nothing. But then Dr Gerard saw her hands – under the table they were busy tearing a delicate handkerchief to pieces.

Chapter 4

Then, in a slow, wheezing voice, Mrs Boynton spoke. 'Ginevra, you're tired. Go up to bed.'

The youngest daughter answered, in an attractive, musical voice. 'I'm not tired, Mother.'

'Yes, you are,' replied Mrs Boynton. 'I know what you're like. You'll be too tired to go out tomorrow. You'll be ill.'

'I'm *not* tired! And I won't be ill!' Ginevra began to tremble.

A soft, calm voice said, 'I'll come upstairs with you, Ginevra.' It was the quiet young woman with dark hair – Nadine Boynton.

'No. Let her go upstairs alone,' said Mrs Boynton.

'I want Nadine to come!' said Ginevra excitedly.

'You would prefer to go alone – wouldn't you, Ginevra?' said Mrs Boynton.

There was a pause. 'Yes, I would prefer to go alone,' said Ginevra Boynton in a flat, dull voice. She got up and left the room.

Dr Gerard put down his newspaper and looked at Mrs Boynton. The old woman was smiling. Then suddenly she looked straight at Dr Gerard, with her small black eyes. He realized that although she was old, Mrs Boynton had a strong personality – and power. Her eyes were dark and frightening and evil. Dr Gerard breathed in quickly. Now he knew the emotion that the family was hiding – it was hate. All her children hated Mrs Boynton.

Dr Gerard thought, 'People would think I am imagining all this!' Then he looked at the quiet young woman, Nadine Boynton. She wore a wedding ring, and was looking anxiously at Lennox. 'So,' thought Dr Gerard, 'she is married to Lennox, the elder son.' And he realized that although she was worried about her husband, Nadine was not afraid of Mrs Boynton.

'This is all very interesting,' said Dr Gerard to himself.

Chapter 5

At that moment a man came into the lounge, saw the Boyntons and walked towards them. He was a pleasant, middle-aged, ordinary-looking American, with a long, clean-shaven face. He was dressed very neatly. 'I've been looking for you,' he said, in a slow pleasant voice. He shook hands with each of the Boyntons. 'And how are you, Mrs Boynton?'

'My health is never good, as you know, Mr Cope,' wheezed the old lady. 'Nadine is taking good care of me, but I can only go sightseeing for a few hours a day.'

'I think it's wonderful, Mrs Boynton, that you have travelled so far,' said Mr Cope.

'It's the mind that's important!' wheezed Mrs Boynton, 'not the body.'

'And where are you going next?' asked Mr Cope. 'I am definitely going to visit Petra, although it takes about a week to travel there and back.'

'I'd love to visit Petra,' said Carol. 'It sounds marvellous.'

'If you can't go to Petra because of your health, Mrs Boynton, perhaps some of your family would like to visit it with me,' suggested Mr Cope.

'We don't want to separate, do we, children?' said Mrs Boynton.

Her question was answered quickly. 'No, Mother.' 'Oh, no.' 'No, of course not.'

'You see, Mr Cope?' said the old woman with a strange smile. 'They won't leave me.'

'You *are* a close family,' said Mr Cope, though his voice sounded unsure.

'We prefer to stay together,' said Mrs Boynton. 'By the way, Raymond, who was that young woman who spoke to you earlier?'

Raymond jumped nervously. His face went red, and then white. 'I – I don't know her name. I – I met her on the train.'

'I don't think we'll speak to her again,' said Mrs Boynton. She tried to stand up, but it was difficult because of her large swollen body. Nadine went to help her. 'Bedtime,' said Mrs Boynton. 'Good night, Mr Cope.' All her family left the room with Mrs Boynton – none of the others thought to stay in the lounge without her. Mr Cope watched them leave, with a strange expression on his face.

Dr Gerard decided to go and talk to Mr Cope. The American certainly seemed like a friendly man, so the doctor walked over and introduced himself.

Mr Cope was impressed. 'I'm very pleased to meet you, Dr Gerard,' he said. 'You are famous in the medical profession. And there are quite a few other famous people staying in this hotel at the moment. As well as you, there's the archaeologist, Sir Manders Stone, and Lady Westholme, a well-known Member of Parliament – and of course the famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot.'

Mr Jefferson Cope was indeed very friendly, and liked to talk. Soon he and Dr Gerard were sitting in the bar of the hotel, and after a few drinks Dr Gerard said, 'So tell me, Mr Cope, what do you know about that American family, the Boyntons?'

'Well,' said Jefferson Cope, 'Nadine Boynton is a very old friend of mine. I knew her before she was married. She worked in a hospital, training to be a nurse. Then she went to stay with the Boyntons, and married Lennox.'

Mr Cope picked up his glass and drank. 'Let me tell you about the Boynton family,' he said. 'Elmer Boynton, who is now dead, was a very charming man. His first wife died when Lennox, Raymond and Carol were young. Then he married his second wife – the lady I was talking to – and they had a daughter, Ginevra. After Elmer died, Mrs Boynton totally devoted herself to the children. She protected them from the real world. They don't have any friends, and have grown up to be very nervous.'

'Do they all live at home?' asked the doctor.

'Yes.'

'Do any of them work?'

'No,' answered Mr Cope. 'Elmer Boynton was a rich man, and he left all his money to Mrs Boynton so she could look after the children – they don't have any money of their own. They live alone in a big house in the country, and they don't go out, or do anything for themselves. I tell you, Dr Gerard, it seems all wrong to me.'

'I agree with you,' said Dr Gerard. 'Do you think it is their fault, or Mrs Boynton's fault?'

Jefferson Cope moved in his chair. 'I think it's Mrs Boynton's fault,' he admitted, 'though I'm sure she meant to be kind. But I'm surprised that none of them want to leave and live their own lives.'

'Perhaps it's impossible for them to do that now,' said Dr Gerard thoughtfully. 'There are ways, Mr Cope, to stop people's minds growing and developing.'

'But surely,' said Jefferson Cope, 'a man – like Lennox – shouldn't sit around doing nothing? It makes things very difficult for Nadine. She doesn't complain, but I know she isn't happy.'

'Do you think Nadine should leave her husband?' asked Dr Gerard.

'Nadine needs to live her own life,' said Jefferson Cope. His face turned red. 'I love and respect Nadine very much. I want her to be happy, and I'm here to help her if she needs me.'

'What does Mrs Boynton think of your friendship with Nadine?' asked Dr Gerard curiously.

'I don't know,' said Jefferson Cope slowly. 'Normally she doesn't like outsiders, but she's been very kind to me. She treats me like I'm part of the family.'

'That seems very strange,' said Dr Gerard. 'I wonder why she doesn't mind you being here. Mrs Boynton interests me. Yes, she interests me very much.'

Dr Gerard had a lot to think about when he went up to bed.

Chapter 6

Sarah King was out enjoying the tourist sights in Jerusalem, and was standing near a famous temple, listening to the water in the fountains. The place was calm and peaceful, although there were other tourists walking around.

Then suddenly she heard loud footsteps, and the Boynton family appeared. Lennox and Raymond were helping Mrs Boynton to walk. Nadine and Mr Cope followed behind them, and Carol came last. As they were leaving, Carol saw Sarah, and after a pause ran towards her.

'I – I must speak to you,' said Carol nervously. 'My brother Raymond didn't mean to be rude to you last night. Please believe me.'

At first Sarah thought that Carol was being ridiculous, but then she realized that something was wrong with the girl – Carol was afraid, and her face was white. 'Do tell me about it,' said Sarah gently.

'It sounds so stupid,' said Carol excitedly. 'I know Ray would like to talk to you. But it's our mother – she isn't well, and she doesn't like us to have friends. We're a strange family.' Carol looked around, nervously. 'I must go now,' she added.

'Can't you stay and talk to me?' asked Sarah.

'No, I can't,' said Carol. 'My mother –'

'It's sometimes difficult for parents to realize that their children are grown up,' said Sarah calmly. 'Why don't you just tell your mother what you want to do?'

Carol's hands twisted nervously. 'You don't understand,' she said. 'Before her marriage my mother – she's my stepmother really – worked in a prison. That's what our lives are like – it's

like being locked up in prison!' She looked around nervously again. 'I – I must go!'

Sarah held Carol's arm to stop her leaving. 'Come to my room after you go to bed,' said Sarah. 'Come and talk to me. I'm in room number 319.' Then she let go of Carol's arm, and the girl quickly ran off. Sarah stood staring after her. She was interrupted by the arrival of Dr Gerard, and Sarah told him what had just happened.

Dr Gerard was interested. 'So Mrs Boynton worked in a prison,' he said. 'That explains a lot of things. She has always wanted to have power over people – she did then, and she does now. She likes to hurt people and make them suffer.'

'That sounds horrible!' exclaimed Sarah. 'Why don't they all leave her – escape and be free?'

Dr Gerard shook his head. 'They can't leave now,' he said. 'Remember that Mrs Boynton has controlled them since they were children. They believe that they have to do everything she says. Oh, I know most people would say that was nonsense, but you and I are doctors – we know it can happen. Now they are too afraid to be free.'

'What will happen when she dies?' asked Sarah.

'It depends,' replied Dr Gerard. 'If Mrs Boynton died now, the younger members of the family could become normal. But I think it may be too late to help Lennox. He doesn't seem to have any hope.'

'How can Mrs Boynton hurt her own family like that?' said Sarah passionately. 'It shouldn't be allowed – someone should stop her!'

Chapter 7

That night Sarah waited in her room, though she didn't think that Carol Boynton would come. She was just going to bed when she heard Carol knock on the door. 'I'm so glad you're here,' Sarah said, as she let the girl in. 'Let me get you some tea.' Carol was nervous, but calmed down while she drank her tea.

'I'm a doctor, you know,' said Sarah. 'I think your mother is very interesting – from a medical point of view. She may have a disease that makes her want to control people.' Sarah said this on purpose – she wanted Carol to think about Mrs Boynton in a different way.

Carol stared. This was a new idea to her. 'It's so good to talk to you!' she said with relief. 'Ray and I have had some strange ideas lately.'

'If you're unhappy,' said Sarah, 'why don't you leave home?'

'We – we can't,' said Carol. 'Mother wouldn't let us. And where would we go? What would we do? We don't have any money.' Sarah could see that Carol was upset, so she changed the subject. 'Do you like your stepmother?' she asked.

Slowly Carol shook her head. 'I hate her,' she whispered. 'Ray and I wish she would die.' Again Sarah changed the subject. 'Tell me about your elder brother, Lennox.'

'Something's wrong with Lennox,' said Carol. 'He doesn't speak much anymore. Nadine is very worried about him.'

'Have Nadine and Lennox been married long?' asked Sarah.

'About four years,' replied Carol. 'Lennox used to go out secretly at night, though he wasn't allowed to – none of us were. Mother was very angry when she found out. Then she asked Nadine – she's a poor relative of my father's – to come and stay. Nadine was training to be a hospital nurse. She came and stayed

with us for a month. Mother was very pleased when Lennox and Nadine fell in love. She helped them get married very quickly, and they now live with us.'

'Did Nadine want to live with you?' asked Sarah.

Carol hesitated. 'I don't think so,' she said, 'but she didn't mind at first. After a while she wanted to leave so she and Lennox could live on their own, but mother wouldn't let them. I don't think mother likes Nadine any more.'

'And what about your sister?' asked Sarah.

'Ginevra?' said Carol. 'I'm worried about Ginevra. She's been acting very strangely lately. She – she doesn't always know what she's doing – she frightens me sometimes. And she won't see a doctor.' Suddenly Carol stood up. 'I must go now,' she said. 'You've been very kind to talk to me. You must think we're a very strange family.'

'Oh, every family is strange,' said Sarah. 'Please visit me again – and bring your brother, if you like.'

'I'll come tomorrow!' said Carol excitedly. 'Goodnight, and thank you.'

Carol went back to her room, opened the door and then gasped with surprise. Mrs Boynton was sitting on her bed. 'Where have you been, Carol?' demanded Mrs Boynton, staring at the girl with her horrible black eyes.

Carol's heart beat faster with fear. 'To see Miss King – Sarah King.'

'Is that the girl who spoke to Raymond last night?'

'Yes, Mother.'

'You are not going to see Miss King again, Carol – do you understand?'

'Yes, Mother.'

'Do you promise?' said Mrs Boynton, standing up with difficulty and using her walking stick.

'Yes, yes – I promise,' said Carol in a dull, empty voice.

'Good.' Mrs Boynton went out and shut the door.

Carol felt sick. She lay down on her bed and cried and cried. While she was talking to Sarah, Carol had been reminded that there was a world outside – a world of sunlight and trees and flowers. But now she was back inside the black walls of her prison.

Chapter 8

When Carol didn't come to Sarah's room the next night, Sarah decided to speak to Nadine Boynton, and luckily found her alone in the hotel lounge the next day. Nadine was surprised when Sarah introduced herself and explained what had happened, but she said, 'I'm glad Carol has found a friend to talk to.'

'But when I spoke to Carol today,' continued Sarah, 'she didn't answer. She just looked at me and hurried away.'

'I'm very sorry,' said Nadine. 'Carol is – a nervous girl.'

After a pause, Sarah decided to speak openly. 'I don't think it's very good for Carol not to have any friends.'

Nadine Boynton looked thoughtfully at Sarah. 'I agree with you,' she said at last. 'But my mother-in-law – Mrs Boynton – is in bad health and doesn't like strangers. I am sure Mrs Boynton told Carol not to talk to you again. Carol is doing what she is told.'

Sarah felt very disappointed at Nadine's words. She thought she'd helped Carol, but it seemed that Mrs Boynton had won. Just then Mrs Boynton came into the hotel lounge, leaning on a walking stick. Raymond was helping her. Mrs Boynton looked at Sarah, with an evil pleasure in her small black eyes. She knew she had won. Sarah turned away.

'I think I'll sit down and rest before I go out,' said Mrs Boynton with enjoyment. Nadine and Raymond sat down beside her.

'So that's Miss King,' said Mrs Boynton. 'Why don't you go and speak to her, Ray?' She smiled unpleasantly.

Raymond's face turned red. 'I don't want to speak to her,' he said.

'No,' said Mrs Boynton, still smiling. 'You won't speak to her. You couldn't even if you wanted to!' She coughed suddenly.

'I'm enjoying this trip, Nadine,' she said. 'I'm very glad we came. Ray?'

'Yes, Mother?'

'Go and get me a magazine from that table.'

Raymond stood up and walked across the room, close to Sarah, who looked up hopefully. But Raymond didn't look at her. His face was white as he handed the magazine to his mother. Very softly Mrs Boynton said, 'Ah . . .' as she watched her son's face. Then she saw that Nadine was looking at her, and she said angrily, 'Where's Mr Cope today?'

'I don't know. I haven't seen him,' said Nadine calmly.

'I like him,' said Mrs Boynton. 'We must see him more often. Would you like that?'

'Yes,' said Nadine. 'I like him, too.'

'And what's the matter with Lennox lately?' continued Mrs Boynton. 'He's very quiet. Perhaps you'd like to live in a house of your own?'

Nadine smiled. 'But you wouldn't like that, mother.'

Mrs Boynton's face turned dark red. 'I forgot my heart medicine,' she said. 'Get it for me, Nadine.'

Nadine stood up and went upstairs to get the medicine. Then she went into her own hotel room, where she found her husband sitting by the window.

'Lennox, we must leave!' said Nadine to her husband. 'We *must* get away.'

It was a moment or two before Lennox answered – it seemed as if Nadine's words had a long way to travel before he heard them. 'Do we have to talk about this again?'

'Yes, we do,' said Nadine. 'Let's go away. I can work and earn money. I want a life of my own – with you. Your mother is mad! She doesn't want you to be happy.'

'But mother can't live for ever,' said Lennox. 'Her health is bad. When she dies we'll get our share of my father's money.'

'It may be too late by then,' said Nadine, 'too late for us to be happy. Lennox, I love you. Are you going to choose me or your mother?'

'You know I love you, Nadine,' said Lennox. 'You're far too good for me.'

'If you don't want to leave,' said Nadine, 'I can't force you. But *I* can leave – in fact, I think I will!'

Lennox stared at his wife. For once he spoke quickly. 'But you can't leave! Mother wouldn't let you.'

'She can't stop me,' said Nadine. 'I can do what I want.'

'Nadine – don't leave me, don't leave me . . .' Lennox spoke like a child. Nadine turned her head away, so that he didn't see how upset she was.

'Then come with me, Lennox – you can!'

Lennox turned away from his wife. 'I can't,' he said, 'I can't. I don't have the courage . . .'

Chapter 9

A few days later, Dr Gerard and Sarah King met at the travel agency, where they were both arranging a visit to Petra. 'Are there many other people going?' Dr Gerard asked Sarah.

'I think it's just you, me and two other women,' replied Sarah. 'Enough people for one car.'

Once they had both made their travel arrangements, they walked out into the sunshine. 'I've been away for a few days,' explained Dr Gerard. 'Is there any news about the Boyntons?'

'I think they're leaving today,' said Sarah, 'and I don't know where they're going.' She told Dr Gerard what had happened. 'I feel stupid for trying to help Carol,' she added.

'Can you ever really help someone else?' asked the doctor. 'At least you tried. From what you have said, Mrs Boynton was very clever about her son Lennox. She invited Nadine – a pretty but poor young woman – to stay, and she even helped Lennox and Nadine get married. But Nadine has a strong personality, and she's not afraid of Mrs Boynton. I'm sure she hopes she can still escape.'

They walked back to the hotel together, and passed Lennox, Nadine and Mr Cope, who were standing next to some suitcases. Dr Gerard went up to his room, while Sarah walked slowly into the hotel lounge. There she saw Mrs Boynton sitting in a chair, waiting to leave. Looking at her, Sarah suddenly felt angry. Mrs Boynton was just a stupid old woman – she was pathetic. She didn't have any *real* power – all she could do was hurt and control her own children. She wasn't important to anyone else.

Sarah went up to her. 'Goodbye, Mrs Boynton,' she said. 'I think you've been very silly, trying to stop Raymond and Carol

talking to me. You're really rather pathetic. It's much better to be kind and friendly to people.'

There was a long pause. Mrs Boynton sat very still, and when she finally spoke her voice could be heard very clearly. Her evil black eyes looked, not directly at Sarah, but over Sarah's shoulder.

'I never forget,' said Mrs Boynton. 'Remember that. I never forget *anything* – an action, a name or a face . . .' The way she spoke these words was so poisonous that Sarah stepped back. And then Mrs Boynton laughed – it was a horrible laugh.

'You poor old thing,' said Sarah, as she turned away.

As Sarah walked towards the lift she met Raymond Boynton. 'Goodbye,' said Sarah. 'I hope you have a lovely time. Perhaps we'll meet again some day.' She smiled at him warmly, and went up to her room. Raymond stood very still, lost in thought. He was standing in front of the lift, and a small man with a big moustache had to speak to him several times before he noticed and moved out of the way.

Just then Carol appeared. 'Ray, will you go and get Ginevra? She's in her room. We're leaving now.'

'All right,' said Raymond. 'I'll go and find her.' He walked towards the lift.

Hercule Poirot, with his eyebrows raised in surprise, watched Raymond as he left. After a while he nodded his head, as if he had decided something. He walked through the lounge and looked at Carol, who was with her mother.

'Excuse me,' Hercule Poirot said to a passing waiter. 'Can you tell me who those people are?'

'The name is Boynton, *monsieur* – they are Americans.'

'Thank you,' said Hercule Poirot.

Up on the third floor of the hotel, Dr Gerard passed Raymond and Ginevra Boynton, who were walking towards the open

doors of the lift. As they were about to get into it, Ginevra said, 'Just a minute, Ray, wait for me in the lift.'

She ran round the corner to Dr Gerard. 'Please help me,' Ginevra said quickly. 'They're taking me away! They want to kill me. I don't belong to them, my name isn't really Boynton. Please help me to escape!'

She stopped suddenly as she heard footsteps. 'Ginevra?' said Ray's voice. The girl looked beautiful as she put a finger on her lips, and looked sadly at Dr Gerard. 'I'm coming, Ray,' she said, and ran back to her brother.

Dr Gerard walked on to his room. Slowly he shook his head and frowned.

Chapter 10

Sarah came down the stairs of the hotel, ready to start the journey to Petra. Outside she saw a large masterful woman, who she knew was also staying at the hotel. The woman was complaining loudly about the size of the car that was going to take them to Petra. 'It is *much* too small for four people – and our guide,' the woman was saying. 'Take it away and bring us a bigger car!'

The young man from the travel agency tried to argue, but the woman wouldn't listen to him. 'This car is not big enough,' she said. 'I was promised that I would travel in a "comfortable car". So you will provide a comfortable car – and at no extra cost!' The young man stopped trying to argue, and left to find a bigger car.

Looking very pleased, the woman turned to Sarah. 'Are you Miss King?' she asked. 'I am Lady Westholme.'

Sarah looked at Lady Westholme – she had heard about her. Lord Westholme, her husband, was a middle-aged man who wasn't very clever. He had met his wife – whose name was Mrs Vansittart – on a ship travelling back to England from America. Soon afterwards they were married.

When she realized that her husband was never going to be a success, the new Lady Westholme was elected as a Member of Parliament. She had strong opinions on everything, especially women's rights – she thought that women were just as good as men – and always thought that she knew best. Everyone respected Lady Westholme, but no one liked her.

Just then Dr Gerard came out of the hotel, and Sarah introduced him to Lady Westholme. Then the fourth person going to Petra arrived. Her name was Miss Amabel Pierce, a

little middle-aged woman, with untidy grey hair. She seemed rather vague and indecisive.

Lady Westholme took control. 'Do you have a job, Miss King?'

'I have just qualified as a doctor,' replied Sarah.

'Good,' said Lady Westholme. 'It is women who will achieve things in this world! I myself am very organized and efficient. Just this morning I told the manager how he could improve things in our hotel.' Lady Westholme did seem to be efficient, because in fifteen minutes a very large and comfortable car arrived. Lady Westholme told the driver the best way to arrange their luggage, and then they started the journey to Petra.

After visiting the Dead Sea, they stopped for lunch at the city of Jericho. While the others went to look at the city, Sarah stayed behind in the hotel garden. She had a headache, and was feeling miserable. Lady Westholme's loud voice, Miss Pierce's chatter – and even Dr Gerard – were all annoying her, and she wished she wasn't going to Petra.

She wondered where the Boyntons were now – and what Raymond was doing. 'Why am I thinking about people I won't see again?' thought Sarah. 'And why did I say those things to Mrs Boynton? It was stupid of me. And I'm sure other people heard what I said – I think Lady Westholme was close by.'

Dr Gerard returned and sat down, wiping his hot face. 'Phew!' he said. 'That woman is unbearable!' Sarah jumped. 'Mrs Boynton?'

'No, I mean Lady Westholme!' said Dr Gerard. 'How does her husband live with her?'

'I've heard that Lord Westholme is very proud of his wife and the work she does,' said Sarah.

'Or perhaps he is pleased that her work takes her away from home,' suggested Dr Gerard. 'She's still unbearable.'

'I just find her annoying,' said Sarah. 'She's so controlling and thinks she knows best. But Miss Pierce is annoying, too – she's so vague and inefficient! She told me that she used to teach very young children. Then a relative died and left her some money, so now she's travelling and enjoying herself.'

At this moment the others returned, and after a short rest they all got back in the car and continued their journey. The road went uphill, twisting and turning. Late in the afternoon they reached the next town, Amman, and went to bed soon after visiting a few sights.

The next morning they got up early, ready to drive all day across the desert. The day was hot, and by the time they stopped for lunch it was even hotter. The heat was making everyone annoyed with each other. Lady Westholme and Dr Gerard had an argument about politics, while Sarah listened to Miss Pierce chatter on about nothing. They reached the town of Ma'an an hour before sunset, and then drove on across the flat desert. Sarah wondered where the city of Petra was. She couldn't see any hills or mountains anywhere, and Petra was built into rock. How much longer did they have to travel?

At the village of Ain Musa their guide Mahmoud said that they were going to leave the car behind and ride on horses to Petra. Miss Pierce looked very uncomfortable sitting on her thin horse, but Lady Westholme wore sensible riding breeches, which did not suit her.

Mahmoud led the horses along a path that went downhill. Sarah, who was tired after the long hot drive in the car, thought that the ride was like a dream. The path twisted down and down, until red cliffs rose high above them on both sides. The path was

deep and narrow and endless, twisting through the tall red cliffs. The sun went down, and still they rode on, lost deep down in the earth. 'It's not real,' thought Sarah, as lamps were lit so they could see. 'I can't believe it's real.'

Then suddenly the narrow cliffs were behind them, and they arrived in a wide open space. Sarah could see lights far ahead of her. 'That is our camp,' explained Mahmoud.

After a while Sarah could see some tents standing on a ridge of rock, higher up against the cliff, and there were some caves, too, in the rocks. They were nearly there. Local Bedouin servants came running out of tents as they approached.

Sarah stared up at one of the caves. She could see something or someone sitting there. What was it? Was it a religious statue, guarding the camp? Then Sarah's heart beat faster. She recognized the sitting figure and knew who it was – Mrs Boynton.

Chapter 11

Mrs Boynton was here, at Petra!

Sarah couldn't believe it. She found it hard to listen to the questions that people were asking her. Would she like dinner? Would she sleep in a tent or a cave? Sarah chose a tent, and was taken there by one of the camp servants. He wore a dirty coat and breeches, much repaired, and untidy puttees – long strips of fabric wrapped round his lower legs. On his head he wore the local *cheffiyah* – a piece of cloth wrapped round his head to protect his face and neck from the sun and the desert sand.

In her tent Sarah washed her face and combed her black hair, which made her feel better. Then she stepped out into the dark night, and started to walk to the large marquee to join the others for dinner.

'*You* – here?' Sarah heard a low, amazed voice. She turned and looked straight into Raymond Boynton's eyes. He looked so amazed and happy to see her, that Sarah was almost afraid. She would remember that look for the rest of her life.

'You,' Raymond said again. He looked dazed – still only half believing.

Sarah's heart beat faster, and she felt very happy but also a little shy. Raymond came towards her and held her hand.

'It *is* you,' Raymond said. 'It's really you. I've been thinking about you so much.' He paused. 'I love you,' he said, 'I've loved you since I first saw you on the train. I didn't mean to ignore you or be rude to you. It isn't my fault – it's my nerves. When mother tells me to do things my nerves make me do them. Please don't hate me. I know I should behave more like a man.'

'You will now,' Sarah said to him. Her voice was sweet – and sure. 'You'll have the courage now, I know you will.'

'Courage,' said Raymond, standing up tall. 'Yes, that's what I need!' Suddenly he kissed Sarah's hand, and then walked away.

Chapter 12

Sarah went to the marquee and found Dr Gerard, Miss Pierce and Lady Westholme eating at the table. Mahmoud explained that the Boyntons had been there two days. 'They are Americans,' Mahmoud said. 'The mother is very heavy and it was very hard work, very hot, to carry her here in a chair!'

'Ha!' said Lady Westholme. 'I think these Americans were staying at our hotel. I've seen the old woman before. I think I saw you talking to her at the hotel, Miss King.' Sarah's face went red. She hoped Lady Westholme had not heard what she said to Mrs Boynton.

'They aren't very *interesting* people,' decided Lady Westholme, and then talked about the famous and interesting Americans she had met. Miss Pierce listened and made noises now and then to show that she agreed.

Because it became very hot later in the day, the next morning Sarah and the others got up early. They had breakfast at six o'clock, where Lady Westholme complained that there wasn't any fruit. There was no sign of the Boynton family.

Just as they left the camp they heard a shout, and turned to see Jefferson Cope hurrying after them. 'I was surprised to see you again, Dr Gerard,' he said. 'I'd like to come with you, if you don't mind.' Dr Gerard introduced Sarah to Mr Cope as they all began to climb uphill.

As well as Mahmoud, they had two local guides with them, who knew the path very well. It was very steep and sometimes dangerous – a fall down the steep sides could kill you. Sarah and Dr Gerard didn't mind being so high up, but Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce didn't like it. Miss Pierce shut her eyes and her face turned green when she saw how high up they were.

Dr Gerard was very kind, and helped her climb up the steepest places.

At last they arrived at the top, and Sarah breathed in the fresh morning air in amazement at the sight of the blood-red rocks all around and below them. The country looked wild and strange – it was different to anything they had ever seen before. The whole world seemed to be at their feet.

'This is the "Place of Sacrifice" – the "High Place",' explained Mahmoud. He showed them the hole cut in the flat rock at their feet. 'This is where animals were sacrificed – killed to please the gods.'

Sarah sat down on a rock, away from the others, to look at the amazing views. She was so lost in thought that she didn't hear Dr Gerard approach. 'What are you thinking about?' he asked.

'I was thinking about the Place of Sacrifice,' Sarah replied. 'Sometimes *people* should be sacrificed – death isn't always as important as we think it is.'

'If that's what you really think,' said Dr Gerard, 'you should not be a doctor. To us, death is always the enemy.'

'Yes, I suppose you are right,' sighed Sarah.

Just then Jefferson Cope joined them. 'This is a remarkable place,' he said. 'I'm very glad I came. Because of her bad health Mrs Boynton can't climb up here. And she doesn't let her family do anything without her.' Mr Cope stopped. His nice kind face looked uncomfortable. 'You know,' he said, 'someone in the hotel told me a story about Mrs Boynton that upset me.'

'Indeed?' said Dr Gerard. 'What was it?'

'I was told that Mrs Boynton had a young woman working for her, as a servant. The woman was going to have a baby. At first Mrs Boynton was very kind to her, but just before the baby was

born she threw the young woman out of the house. I think that is a very cruel and heartless thing to do,' continued Mr Cope, 'and I don't understand why she did it.'

'I'm sure Mrs Boynton enjoyed it very much,' said Dr Gerard. 'She seems to like being cruel to people.'

Mr Cope looked shocked. 'I think, Dr Gerard,' he said, walking away, 'that I'll look at the view from over there.' Dr Gerard smiled and looked at Sarah. Her face was very serious, as if she had decided something.

Now Miss Pierce came towards them. 'We're going down now,' she said nervously. 'Mahmoud says going down is easier, and we follow a different path.' The path down was indeed easier, and there were no steep places to worry about. They arrived back at the camp tired but happy, and ready for lunch. It was past two o'clock.

The Boynton family was in the marquee, finishing their lunch. Lady Westholme spoke to them kindly, but as if they were rather stupid. 'We had a very interesting morning,' she said. 'Petra is a wonderful place.'

Carol answered, 'Oh, yes – yes, it is.' That was the end of the conversation.

As they ate, the four discussed their plans for the afternoon. 'I will rest, said Miss Pierce. 'It's important not to do too much.'

'I'll go for a walk and explore,' said Sarah. 'What about you, Dr Gerard?'

'I'll go with you,' said the doctor.

Mrs Boynton suddenly dropped a spoon loudly, and everyone jumped.

'I think,' said Lady Westholme, 'that I too will rest this afternoon. Perhaps I'll go for a walk later on.'

Slowly, with the help of Lennox, Mrs Boynton stood up. 'You can all go for a walk this afternoon,' she said to her family, smiling. It was almost funny to see how surprised they all looked. 'But what about you, Mother?' asked Carol.

'I don't need any of you,' said Mrs Boynton. 'I'll sit alone and read. Ginevra, you can stay. Go and lie down – get some sleep.'

'But Mother, I'm not tired,' said Ginevra. 'I want to go with the others.'

'You *are* tired,' said Mrs Boynton. 'You've got a headache! Go and sleep. I know what's best for you.'

Ginevra stared at her mother for a while, then did as she was told. She left the marquee, and the rest of the family slowly followed her.

'What strange people,' said Miss Pierce. 'The mother's face looks very red. Perhaps she has a bad heart. The heat must be very bad for her health.'

'Why is Mrs Boynton letting the family go for a walk?' thought Sarah to herself. 'She knows Raymond wants to be with me. Why? Is she planning something?' Since last night Sarah had realized that she loved Raymond Boynton, and would do anything to protect him and make him happy.

After lunch, Sarah went to her tent and changed her clothes. She returned to the marquee at about quarter past three. Lady Westholme was sitting in a chair, reading a dull, official-looking report. Despite the heat she was still wearing her thick wool skirt. Dr Gerard was talking to Miss Pierce, who was standing by her tent holding a book called *The Journey of Love* – 'an exciting story of romance and passion'.

'I will lie down later,' said Miss Pierce. 'It's cool and pleasant here, in the shadow of the marquee. Oh dear,' she continued,

'do you think that old lady is wise to sit in the sun up there? It's very hot.'

They all looked at the ridge in front of them, where Mrs Boynton was sitting like a statue in front of her cave – just as she had done the night before. All the camp servants were asleep, and there was no one else in sight except for a small group of people walking together a short distance away.

'I wonder why Mrs Boynton has allowed her family to go off and enjoy themselves,' said Dr Gerard to Sarah. 'Is she planning something new?'

'That's just what I thought!' said Sarah. 'Do you want to walk with them?'

'Yes,' said Dr Gerard. 'They're not far ahead – we'll catch them up.'

For once, the Boyntons looked happy and relaxed. Soon Lennox and Nadine, Carol and Raymond, Mr Cope, Sarah and Dr Gerard, were all laughing and talking together. Everyone was enjoying their unexpected freedom. Sarah walked with Carol and Lennox, Dr Gerard talked to Raymond, and Nadine and Jefferson Cope walked a little apart.

Soon, however, Dr Gerard stopped. 'I'm very sorry,' he said, 'but I must go back to the camp. I can feel an attack of malaria coming on. I caught it in Africa.'

'Shall I come with you?' asked Sarah.

'No, no,' said Dr Gerard. 'I'll go back and take some medicine – some quinine. I have some in my medicine bag. Please, enjoy your walk.' He turned and quickly walked back towards the camp. Sarah wondered whether or not she should follow, but then she looked at Raymond and forgot about the doctor.

After staying with the others for a while, Sarah and Raymond walked away together. They sat down on a rock in the shade. They talked to each other about their lives, and then sat holding hands in silence. The sun was getting lower in the sky.

'I'm going back now,' said Raymond, 'by myself. There's something I have to say and do. But I must do it, and do it alone.'

'Do what?' asked Sarah.

'I've got to prove my courage,' said Raymond. He looked very serious. 'And I must do it *now*.' He stood up suddenly and quickly walked away. Sarah was a little afraid – Raymond had been so serious.

The sun was setting when Sarah came back to the camp. She saw that Mrs Boynton was still sitting outside her cave. Sarah hurried past on the path below to the marquee. Inside, Lady Westholme was telling Miss Pierce her opinions on changing the divorce laws. The Boyntons were sitting and reading. Sarah went back to her tent to wash before dinner, and then went to visit Dr Gerard.

She stopped outside the doctor's tent, and called his name quietly. There was no answer. Sarah looked inside the tent, and saw Dr Gerard lying still on his bed. She hoped he was asleep, and went away quietly.

In the marquee, everyone was there except Dr Gerard and Mrs Boynton. A servant was sent to tell the old lady that dinner was ready. After a few minutes there was a sudden noise, and two servants ran up to Mahmoud, looking frightened. There was some excited speech in Arabic. Mahmoud went outside, and Sarah followed him. 'What's the matter?' she asked. 'Can I help?'

'The old lady is very ill,' said Mahmoud. 'She cannot move.'

'I'll come and see,' said Sarah. She followed Mahmoud up the ridge to the old woman's cave. Sarah touched Mrs Boynton's hand, and felt for her pulse. There was no sign of life.

Sarah's face was pale as she went into the marquee. 'I'm sorry,' she said to the Boyntons, 'but your mother is dead.'

She watched the faces of the five people who were now free . . .

Part II

Chapter 1

Hercule Poirot had arrived at the town of Amman and was staying with Colonel Carbury, who was the man in charge of the area. Colonel Carbury had gentle blue eyes and a bald head – and was very untidy.

The Colonel smiled across the table at his guest. 'I'll be very happy to show you around,' he said to Hercule Poirot. 'There are some very interesting things to see.' The two men had a drink, and then after a pause Colonel Carbury asked, 'Does your profession follow you around, Poirot? I mean, do you often find dead bodies when you are on holiday?'

'It has happened a few times, yes,' admitted Poirot.

'There's a dead body here that I'm not happy about,' said the Colonel. 'It's an old American woman, who died at Petra. It's very likely that she died a natural death – but I think her family killed her. No one liked her, but if she was murdered it will be very difficult to prove. Still, I want to know what happened.'

Hercule Poirot nodded. 'Was there a doctor there?' he asked.

'Yes, there were two doctors,' replied Colonel Carbury. 'One was ill with malaria, and the other – a young woman – is just qualified. But the old woman's death wasn't unexpected. Her health was bad, and she was taking medicine for her heart.'

'So why, my friend, are you worried?' asked Poirot gently.

'Have you heard of Dr Theodore Gerard?' the Colonel asked him.

'Yes,' replied Poirot. 'He is very famous.'

'Well, he's the doctor who was ill with malaria. I'll phone him and ask him to come and tell you his story.' When Colonel Carbury had used the phone, Poirot said, 'Tell me about this American family.'

'The family name is Boynton,' answered the Colonel. 'There are two sons – one married – and two daughters.'

'Boynton?' interrupted Poirot. 'That is strange – very strange.'

'The mother was an unpleasant old woman,' continued the Colonel. 'She had all the money and made her family do everything she wanted.'

'Aha!' said Poirot. 'That is interesting. Do you know who inherits her money?'

'It's divided equally between all the family,' said Colonel Carbury. 'So maybe just one of them killed her – or maybe they all helped. Or maybe I'm completely wrong!'

Chapter 2

When Dr Gerard arrived, Colonel Carbury introduced him to Hercule Poirot. 'Tell Monsieur Poirot the facts,' the Colonel said to the doctor. 'He's very interested.'

'I am always interested in crime,' admitted Poirot, as the three men sat down with a drink.

'Well,' said Dr Gerard, 'I'll tell you my story, and you can see what you think.' He told Poirot everything that had happened before and after his arrival at Petra, and then described his return to the camp on the afternoon of Mrs Boynton's death. 'I was very ill with malaria,' Dr Gerard continued. 'When I got to my tent I couldn't find my medicine bag for a while – it wasn't where I left it. When I did find it, I opened the bag but I couldn't find my syringe. I was going to inject myself with quinine. I looked for the syringe for a while, but finally drank the quinine instead and lay down on my bed.'

Dr Gerard paused. 'Mrs Boynton had been sitting in the same place, and hadn't moved all afternoon,' he continued. 'We didn't know she was dead until six-thirty, when one of the servants went to tell her that dinner was ready. Miss Sarah King, who is a qualified doctor, looked at the body and decided that Mrs Boynton had been dead for some time.'

'How long exactly had Mrs Boynton been dead?' asked Poirot.

'Miss King didn't think that was important,' said Dr Gerard.

'But when was she last seen alive?' said Poirot.

Colonel Carbury read from an official-looking document. 'Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce spoke to Mrs Boynton shortly after four o'clock,' he said. 'Lennox Boynton spoke to his mother about four-thirty, and his wife Nadine talked to her about five

minutes later. Carol Boynton also spoke to her mother, but doesn't know when. We think it was about ten minutes past five.

'Jefferson Cope, an American friend of the family, returned to the camp with Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce, and saw that Mrs Boynton was asleep. He did not speak to her. That was about twenty to six. It seems that Raymond Boynton, the younger son, was the last person to see his mother alive. He returned from a walk and spoke to her at about ten minutes to six.'

'Did anyone go near Mrs Boynton after her son Raymond?' asked Poirot.

'I don't think so. From six o'clock servants were busy and people were going to and from their tents. No one saw anyone approach the old lady.'

'So Raymond Boynton was the last person to see his mother alive,' said Poirot. Dr Gerard and Colonel Carbury looked at each other. 'But there's a problem,' said Dr Gerard. 'Miss King said that Mrs Boynton had been dead for "some time". But when I told her that Raymond had spoken to his mother just before six, she said that was impossible – Mrs Boynton was already dead by then.'

'That is very curious,' said Poirot. 'What does Raymond Boynton say about that?'

'He swears that his mother was alive,' said Colonel Carbury. 'Raymond said something like, "I'm back – I hope you had a nice afternoon". He says that his mother answered, "Quite all right" and he went on to his tent.'

'Curious,' said Poirot again, with a frown. 'And when did you see the body, Dr Gerard?'

'Not until nine o'clock the next morning,' replied the doctor. 'By then it was impossible to say how long Mrs Boynton had been dead. All I can say is that she had been dead for at least

twelve hours, but not dead more than eighteen hours. And that doesn't help.'

'Go on, Dr Gerard,' said Colonel Carbury. 'Tell Poirot everything else.'

'When I got up in the morning,' said Dr Gerard, 'I found my syringe behind some bottles on my table.' He leaned forward. 'Perhaps I was too ill to see it the day before – I was shaking and had a fever. But I'm sure the syringe was not there the day before. And there was a mark on Mrs Boynton's wrist that could have been made by a syringe. Carol Boynton says the mark was made by a pin.'

'Ah!' said Poirot. 'Please continue.'

'And finally,' said Dr Gerard, 'when I looked in my medicine bag I saw that some of my drug digitalin was missing – and injecting someone with a large dose of digitalin causes death by stopping the heart.'

'Mrs Boynton already had a bad heart, I believe,' said Poirot.

'Yes, she did,' replied Dr Gerard. 'In fact she was taking a medicine containing digitalin. If she took too much medicine over time, she may have died of digitalin poisoning – but a medical examination would not show it.'

Colonel Carbury looked at Poirot. 'So what's your expert opinion?' he asked. 'Was it murder or not?'

'Wait,' said Poirot. 'I too have some evidence.' He smiled at their look of surprise. 'At the window of my hotel room in Jerusalem, I heard a voice, which said, "Don't you agree that she's got to be killed?" At the time I did not think these words were about a real murder – but now I am not so sure.'

Poirot paused. 'And I believe I know who spoke those words,' he said. 'It was a young man I later saw in the hotel – Raymond Boynton.'

Chapter 3

'So Raymond Boynton said that!' exclaimed Colonel Carbury. 'He is definitely the most obvious suspect. It will be difficult to prove anything, but if it *is* murder, we must do something!'

'What do you think, Dr Gerard?' asked Poirot.

'Mrs Boynton was an unpleasant woman – and with a weak heart she could have died at any time,' said Dr Gerard slowly. 'Now she is dead her family are free.'

'So you are satisfied?' said Poirot.

'*No*!' said Dr Gerard, hitting the table with his hand. 'I am not "satisfied". I am a doctor – I try to save life, not to take it. It is not right for a human being to die before her time has come.'

'Dr Gerard doesn't like murder,' said Colonel Carbury, pouring them more drinks. 'And neither do I.'

'Very well,' said Poirot. 'I will find out exactly who killed Mrs Boynton – if she *was* killed. I will find out the truth.'

'How will you do that?' asked Dr Gerard.

'I will carefully examine the evidence, and use method and reason,' replied Poirot. 'First, I need to decide whether this murder was planned and carried out by all the Boynton family, or just one of them.'

'If it's just one of them,' said Dr Gerard, 'it's most likely to be Raymond Boynton.'

'I agree,' said Poirot. 'The words I overheard and the fact that his story does not fit with Miss King's story, make him the obvious suspect. Tell me, Dr Gerard, are Raymond Boynton and Miss King attracted to each other?'

The Frenchman nodded. 'Definitely – they seem to like each other very much.'

'Aha! I believe I have seen Miss King – in the Solomon Hotel. After she spoke to Raymond Boynton he stood still – as if in a dream – blocking the exit from the lift. Three times I had to say "*Pardon*" before he heard me and moved.'

Poirot thought for a moment. 'So Miss King is involved with the Boynton family, and could have wanted Mrs Boynton to die. We must remember that when we consider her medical evidence.'

Colonel Carbury coughed. 'Can I interrupt?' he asked. 'Those words you overheard, "Don't you agree that she's got to be killed?" Who was Raymond Boyton speaking to?'

'A good point,' said Poirot. 'I had not forgotten it. He must have been speaking to a member of his family. Dr Gerard, can you tell us about the Boyntons from a professional point of view – as a doctor?'

'Raymond and Carol Boynton were in a very nervous state,' said the doctor. 'Lennox Boynton appeared to have given up hope – he was lifeless and quiet. I believe that Nadine, his wife, was deciding whether or not to leave her husband.' He described his conversation with Jefferson Cope.

'And what about the younger daughter, Ginevra?' asked Poirot.

Dr Gerard looked serious. 'She may have a mental illness called schizophrenia,' he said. 'She is trying to escape her real life by living in a fantasy world – she says she is in danger, with enemies all around her.'

'But they all know who did it!' said Colonel Carbury unexpectedly. 'They're all hiding something!'

'They will tell me what they know,' said Poirot confidently. 'When they talk, people normally tell the truth because it is

easier than telling lies all the time – and so, the truth becomes clear. But there may be no *proof*.'

'Once I know the truth, said the Colonel, 'I can decide what to do next. But I can't give you much time. I can only keep everyone here in Amman for another twenty-four hours.'

'You will have the truth by tomorrow night,' said Poirot quietly.

Chapter 4

Hercule Poirot was interviewing everyone in a hotel room in Amman. Sarah King was first. 'I don't understand why I'm talking to you,' she said. 'I know you're an expert on crime, Monsieur Poirot, but there was nothing strange about Mrs Boynton's death. The journey to Petra was too much for a woman with a bad heart. And if there's any doubt you can have an official medical examination in Jerusalem.'

'But there is something that Dr Gerard has not told you,' explained Poirot. 'A supply of digitalin is missing from his medicine bag.'

'Oh!' said Sarah, thinking for a moment. 'Is Dr Gerard sure? He was ill with malaria at the time.'

'He looked in his bag on the night he arrived in Petra. He is almost certain that the digitalin was there then.'

'Almost – ?' said Sarah.

Poirot shrugged his shoulders. 'Yes, there is a doubt – as any honest person would feel.'

Sarah nodded. 'Yes,' she agreed. 'People who always feel sure about things can't always be trusted. But Monsieur Poirot, there is very little evidence. Do you really need to be involved? Haven't the Boyntons suffered enough?'

'So you think that the very unpleasant Mrs Boynton is better dead than alive?' asked Poirot. 'But to me it does not matter what the victim is like – good or bad. I do not approve of murder.'

'*Murder*?' Sarah breathed in quickly. 'Why do you think that?'

'There is other evidence, *mademoiselle*,' replied Poirot. 'There is the mark of a syringe on the dead woman's wrist. And I myself heard Raymond Boynton say "Don't you agree that she's got

to be killed?" So that is why I am investigating Mrs Boynton's death. Will you help me?'

Sarah's face had turned pale, but after a pause she nodded. 'Yes,' she said quietly. 'I think what you're doing is right.'

'Thank you, *mademoiselle*,' replied Poirot. 'Now, please tell me what you remember about that day.'

Sarah thought for a moment. 'In the morning we went out with Mahmoud. None of the Boyntons were with us. I saw them at lunch – they were finishing as we came in. Mrs Boynton seemed strangely cheerful, and she let her family go for a walk – it was very unusual.'

'Why do you think she did that?' asked Poirot.

'I was puzzled,' admitted Sarah. 'I thought she must be planning something. Then the Boyntons left – all except Ginevra, who went to lie down in her tent. Dr Gerard and I joined the others on their walk, at about half-past three.'

'Where was Mrs Boynton then?' asked Poirot.

'She was sitting in her chair outside her cave,' said Sarah. 'Dr Gerard and I walked with the others for a while, and then Dr Gerard became ill and went back to the camp at about four. The rest of us went on walking.'

'Were you all together?' Poirot asked.

'We were at first,' said Sarah, 'then 'Nadine Boynton and Mr Cope went one way and Carol, Lennox, Raymond and I went another. Later Raymond and I sat down alone on a rock together, and when Raymond left I stayed to look at the view. At about half-past five I thought I should go back to the camp, and arrived at six – it was just about sunset.'

'Did you see Mrs Boynton as you came back to the camp?'

'Yes,' replied Sarah. 'She was still sitting outside her cave. I went to the marquee – everyone was there except Dr Gerard. I

washed in my tent and then came back to the marquee. One of the servants went to tell Mrs Boynton about dinner, and came running back to say she was ill. I hurried out to help, but as soon as I touched her I knew she was dead. Because she had a heart problem, I thought she could have died in her sleep.'

'Did you have an opinion on how long Mrs Boynton had been dead?'

'Not really,' said Sarah, 'though she had clearly been dead for over an hour – perhaps longer.'

'Over an hour?' said Poirot. 'Do you know, Mademoiselle King, that Raymond Boynton spoke to his mother about half an hour earlier, and says that she was then alive and well?'

Sarah didn't look at Poirot, but she shook her head. 'Raymond must have made a mistake. It must have been earlier than that.'

'No, *mademoiselle*, it was not.' Poirot noticed that Sarah's mouth was very firm and determined.

'Well,' said Sarah, 'I'm young and I haven't seen many dead bodies, but I'm sure that Mrs Boynton had been dead at least an hour – if not more!'

'So can you explain,' said Hercule Poirot, 'why Raymond Boynton said that his mother was alive when she was dead?'

'I've no idea,' said Sarah. 'All the Boyntons are rather vague about times – they're a very nervous family.'

'And did you ever speak to Mrs Boynton?' Poirot inquired.

Sarah's face reddened. 'Yes, I did – on the day Mrs Boynton left Jerusalem,' she admitted. 'I made myself look very silly.' Sarah unwillingly told Poirot what had happened. He seemed interested and asked lots of questions. 'It is important for me to understand Mrs Boynton, and know how her mind worked,' explained Poirot. 'Your opinion of her is valuable. Thank you for your help, *mademoiselle* – I will now speak to the other witnesses.'

Sarah stood up. 'Excuse me, Monsieur Poirot, but why don't you wait until after the official medical examination? Then you will *know* if Mrs Boynton was murdered or not.'

Poirot waved his hand importantly. 'This is the method of Hercule Poirot,' he announced. Sarah frowned, and left the room.

Chapter 5

Lady Westholme entered next, looking confident and important. She was followed by Miss Amabel Pierce, who sat down slightly behind Lady Westholme, in the background.

'I am happy to help you, Monsieur Poirot,' said Lady Westholme loudly. 'It is my public duty.' She talked about her public duty for some time before Poirot managed to ask her exactly what happened that afternoon.

'After lunch I decided to rest,' said Lady Westholme. 'The morning had been quite tiring. Miss Pierce agreed with me.'

'Oh, yes,' sighed Miss Pierce. 'I was very tired after the morning. It was such a dangerous and exhausting climb.'

'So after lunch you both went to your tents?' Poirot asked.

'Yes,' replied Lady Westholme.

'Was Mrs Boynton then sitting at the mouth of her cave?'

'Yes, she was,' said Lady Westholme.

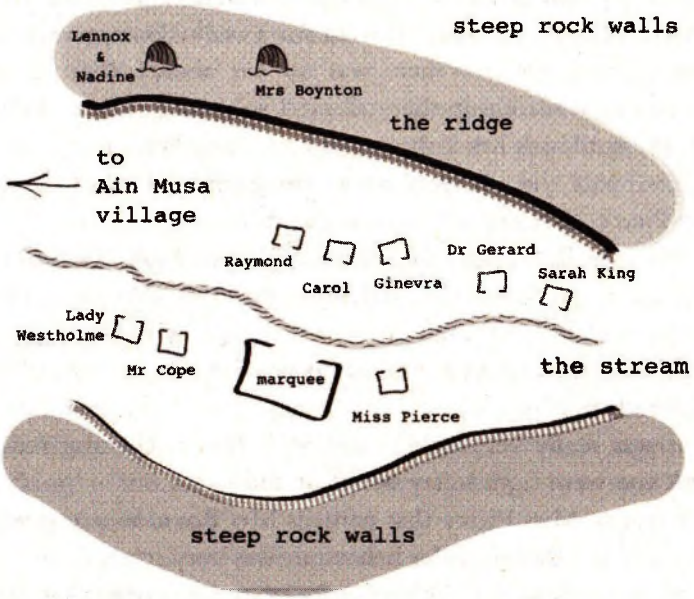
'Could you both see Mrs Boynton?'

'Oh, yes,' said Miss Pierce. 'She was opposite, you know – a little way along and up above.'

Lady Westholme explained. 'The caves were up on a higher ridge of rock. Below the ridge were some tents. Then there was a small river – only a stream, really – and across that stream was the marquee and some other tents. Miss Pierce and I had tents near the marquee – she was on the right side of the marquee and I was on the left. The opening of our tents faced the ridge, but of course it was some distance away.'

'Nearly two hundred yards, I believe,' said Poirot. 'I have a plan of the camp here. It says that Lennox Boynton and his wife Nadine were staying in the cave next to Mrs Boynton's. Below but more to the right – almost opposite the marquee – were the

The Camp at Petra



tents of Raymond, Carol and Ginevra Boynton. On the right of Ginevra Boynton's tent was Dr Gerard's, and next to his tent was that of Miss King. On the other side of the stream – next to the marquee on the left – is your tent, Lady Westholme, and the tent of Mr Cope. Miss Pierce's tent was on the right of the marquee. Is that correct?'

Lady Westholme agreed that it was.

'Thank you. That is perfectly clear. Please continue, Lady Westholme.'

'At about quarter to four I went to Miss Pierce's tent to see if she wanted to go for a walk,' said Lady Westholme. 'Miss Pierce was sitting in the entrance of her tent, reading. We agreed to start in about half an hour when the sun was less hot. I went back to my tent and read for about twenty-five minutes. Then I joined Miss Pierce and we went for a walk. Everyone in the camp seemed asleep – there was no one about. When I saw Mrs Boynton sitting up there alone, I suggested to Miss Pierce that we should ask her if she wanted anything before we left.'

'Yes, you did. It was very thoughtful of you,' agreed Miss Pierce. 'But she was so rude about it!'

'As we walked under the ridge,' explained Lady Westholme, 'I asked if we could do anything for her. Do you know, Monsieur Poirot, the only answer she gave us was a grunt! A grunt! She just looked at us as though we were – as though we were nothing!'

'It was really very rude!' said Miss Pierce, turning red. 'I think you were right to say what you did.'

'I said to Miss Pierce that perhaps Mrs Boynton was *drunk*!' said Lady Westholme. 'Her behaviour was very strange.'

'Had Mrs Boynton's behaviour been strange earlier that day – at lunchtime, perhaps?' asked Poirot.

'N-No,' said Lady Westholme, thinking. 'No, her behaviour then had been fairly normal.'

'She was very angry with that servant,' said Miss Pierce, 'just before we left the camp.'

'Oh! Yes, I remember, she did seem very annoyed with him! Of course,' continued Lady Westholme, 'it is difficult when servants don't speak English, but when you are travelling you must be patient with foreigners.'

'What servant was this?' asked Poirot.

'One of the Bedouin servants in the camp,' said Lady Westholme. 'He went up to Mrs Boynton and she was very angry – I don't know why. The poor man went away as fast as he could, and she shook her stick at him and called out.'

'What did she say?'

'We were too far away to hear. At least I didn't hear anything – did you, Miss Pierce?'

'No, I didn't. I think Mrs Boynton had asked him to get something from her daughter Ginevra's tent – or perhaps she was angry because he went into her daughter's tent – I don't know exactly.'

'What did he look like?' Poirot asked Miss Pierce.

She shook her head. 'Really, I don't know – he was too far away.'

'He was a man of more than average height,' said Lady Westholme, 'and wore the usual Bedouin *cheffiyah* round his head. His breeches were very torn and had been much repaired – shocking! – and his puttees were very untidy. These men need to be managed better!'

'Could you tell me which servant it was?'

'I don't think so,' said Lady Westholme. 'We didn't see his face – it was too far away.'

'I wonder,' said Poirot thoughtfully, 'what he did to make Mrs Boynton so angry? We will have to find out. Please continue, Lady Westholme.'

'We walked along slowly,' said Lady Westholme. 'And then we met Dr Gerard. He looked very ill.'

'He was shaking,' added Miss Pierce. 'Shaking all over.'

'I saw at once that he had malaria,' said Lady Westholme. 'I offered to go back to the camp with him and get him some quinine, but he said he had some with him.'

'Poor man,' said Miss Pierce. 'It seems wrong for a doctor to be ill.'

'We walked on,' continued Lady Westholme. 'And then we sat down on a rock, with a very good view of all the scenery – though we could still see the camp.'

'So romantic,' murmured Miss Pierce. 'A camp in the middle of the rose-red rocks.'

'Did you see anyone else?' Poirot inquired.

'Yes,' said Lady Westholme. 'Lennox Boynton and his wife passed us on their way back to the camp.'

'Were they together?'

'No, Lennox Boynton came first. He looked as if he had too much sun – he was walking as though he was dizzy.'

'What did Lennox Boynton do when he returned to the camp?' asked Poirot.

This time Miss Pierce managed to speak first. 'He went to see his mother, but he stayed only a minute or two,' she said.

'Then he went into his cave and after that he went down to the marquee,' said Lady Westholme.

'What did his wife Nadine do?' asked Poirot.

'She passed us a few minutes later,' said Lady Westholme. 'She stopped and spoke to us – quite politely.'

'I think she's very nice,' said Miss Pierce. 'Very nice indeed.'

'Did you watch Nadine Boynton return to the camp?'

'Yes. She went up and spoke to Mrs Boynton for about ten minutes,' said Lady Westholme. 'After that she went down to the marquee where her husband was.'

'What happened next?' inquired Poirot.

'That strange American, Mr Cope, came along,' said Lady Westholme. 'He told us there were some interesting ruins nearby,

and took us to see them. Then we walked back to the camp at about twenty minutes to six.'

'Was Mrs Boynton still sitting where you had left her?' asked Poirot.

'Yes,' Lady Westholme replied, 'but I didn't speak to her. I went to my tent, changed my shoes and got out my own packet of China tea. I then went to the marquee and told Mahmoud to make some tea – and to make sure the water was boiled properly!'

'Was there anyone in the marquee?' Poirot asked.

'Oh, yes. Lennox and Nadine Boynton were sitting at one end reading, and Carol Boynton was there too.'

'And Mr Cope?'

'He had some tea with us,' said Miss Pierce, 'though he said tea-drinking wasn't an American habit.'

'And then what happened?' said Poirot.

'Raymond and Ginevra Boynton came in shortly afterwards,' said Lady Westholme. 'Miss King arrived last. When dinner was ready, one of the servants was sent to tell Mrs Boynton. The man came running back with his colleague and spoke to Mahmoud, who went out with Miss King. When she came back Miss King told Mrs Boynton's family that she was dead.'

'And what did Mrs Boynton's family do when they heard the news?' asked Poirot.

For the first time Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce didn't know what to say. 'Well,' said Lady Westholme uncertainly, 'they – they were very quiet. They all went out with Miss King. Miss Pierce and I very sensibly stayed where we were.' Miss Pierce looked regretful – she had obviously wanted to go and see what was happening!

'Later,' finished Lady Westholme, 'we had dinner before the Boynton family so they could eat alone. After dinner I, Miss

Pierce and Miss King went back to our tents, while Mr Cope – as a friend of the family – stayed with the Boyntons. That's all I know, Monsieur Poirot.'

'When Miss King told them of the death of their mother, did all the Boynton family leave the marquee?' Poirot asked Lady Westholme.

'Yes – no. I think that the youngest girl, Ginevra, stayed behind. Do you remember, Miss Pierce?'

'Yes, I think – I am quite sure she did.'

'What did Ginevra Boynton do?' asked Poirot. 'Did she say anything?'

'No,' Lady Westholme frowned. 'She – er – she just sat there.'

'She twisted her fingers together,' said Miss Pierce suddenly. 'She didn't show anything on her face, but her hands were twisting and turning.'

'Is there anything else, Monsieur Poirot?' asked Lady Westholme.

Poirot had been thinking. 'No, nothing,' he said. 'You have been very clear – and certain.'

'I have an excellent memory,' said Lady Westholme with satisfaction.

'One last thing, Lady Westholme,' said Poirot. 'Please do not look round. Can you describe what Miss Pierce is wearing today?'

Lady Westholme looked annoyed, but said, 'Miss Pierce is wearing a striped brown and white cotton dress, and a belt of red, blue and beige leather. She is wearing beige silk stockings and brown leather shoes. There is a hole in her left stocking. She is wearing a bright blue necklace and a silver butterfly ring on the third finger of her right hand.' Lady Westholme paused. 'Is there anything else?' she asked coldly.

'Excellent, *madame*!' said Poirot, 'You see everything!' Lady Westholme stood up and left the room. Miss Pierce, looking down sadly at her left stocking, started to follow.

'One moment, please, *mademoiselle*,' said Poirot.

'Yes?' Miss Pierce looked up nervously.

Poirot leaned forward. 'Do you see these wild flowers on the table?'

'Yes,' said Miss Pierce – staring.

'And you noticed that when you first came into the room I sneezed once or twice?'

'Yes?'

'Did you notice if I had just been smelling these flowers?'

'Well – really – I don't know.'

'But you remember that I sneezed?'

'Oh yes, I remember that!'

'Ah, well, it is of no importance. I just wondered if these flowers gave me hay fever.'

'Hay fever?' said Miss Pierce. 'I remember a cousin of mine had it very badly.'

With some difficulty Poirot finally got rid of Miss Pierce. 'But I did not sneeze,' he said quietly, when he had shut the door. 'No, I did not sneeze.'

Chapter 6

Lennox Boynton came into the room with a quick, confident step. Instead of looking exhausted, he now looked lively and wide awake – and nervous.

'Good morning, Monsieur Boynton.' Poirot stood up politely. 'Thank you for talking to me.'

'Why are you asking everyone questions?' Lennox said crossly. 'That's what I want to know.'

'If you do not want to answer –' Poirot said.

Lennox Boynton said quickly, 'No, not at all. Only – it seems – all so unnecessary.'

'I understand,' replied Poirot, 'but it is just a matter of routine. Now, on the afternoon of your mother's death, I believe you left the camp at Petra and went for a walk?'

'Yes. We all went – except mother and Ginevra.'

'Was your mother then sitting outside her cave?'

'Yes, she sat there every afternoon,' said Lennox.

'When did you leave the camp?' asked Poirot.

'Soon after three, I believe.'

'And when did you return from your walk?'

'I don't know what time it was,' said Lennox. 'Four or five o'clock, perhaps. About an hour or two after I left.'

'Did you pass anyone on your way back? Two ladies sitting on a rock, for instance?'

'I don't know. Yes, I think I did.'

'Did you speak to your mother when you got back to the camp?'

'Yes – yes, I did.'

'She did not complain of feeling ill?'

'No – no, she seemed perfectly all right.'

'May I ask what you both said?'

Lennox paused. 'She said I was back soon. I said, yes, I was.' He paused again, thinking hard. 'I said it was hot. She – she asked me the time – said her watch had stopped. I took it from her, wound it up, set the time, and put it back on her wrist.'

Poirot interrupted. 'And what time was it?'

'It – it was twenty-five minutes to five.'

'So you *do* know exactly the time you returned to the camp,' said Poirot gently.

Lennox reddened. 'Yes, how stupid of me! I'm sorry, Monsieur Poirot, I can't think properly. All this worry –'

'Oh! I understand,' said Poirot quickly. 'And what happened next?'

'I asked my mother if she wanted anything,' continued Lennox. 'She said no. Then I went to the marquee. None of the servants seemed to be there. I drank some water and sat there reading the old newspapers – and I think I fell asleep. Then Nadine came in.'

'And you did not see your mother alive again?' asked Poirot.

'No.'

'Did she seem annoyed or upset when you talked to her?'

'No, she was exactly as usual.'

'She did not speak about any trouble with one of the servants?'

Lennox stared. 'No, nothing at all.'

'And that is all you can tell me?'

'I am afraid so – yes.'

'Thank you, Monsieur Boynton – that is all.'

Lennox didn't seem to want to go. 'Er – there's nothing else?'

'Nothing,' replied Poirot. 'Please could you ask your wife to come in next?'

As Lennox went out slowly, Poirot wrote on the paper beside him, L.B. 4.35 p.m.

Chapter 7

Poirot looked with interest at the tall, calm young woman who entered the room and sat down. 'I hope you do not mind, *madame*, talking to me at this sad time?'

Nadine Boynton looked at him thoughtfully. After a pause she said, 'I will be honest with you, Monsieur Poirot. I did not love my mother-in-law, Mrs Boynton, and I am not sorry that she is dead.'

'Thank you, *madame*, for speaking so openly.'

'But I do blame myself,' continued Nadine. 'I was the cause of my mother-in-law's death. You could even say that I killed her.'

Poirot leaned back in his chair. 'Will you explain that more clearly, *madame*?'

Nadine bent her head. 'My married life,' she said, 'has not been happy. I thought that Mrs Boynton had too much power over my husband. On the afternoon of Mrs Boynton's death I decided to leave Lennox, and go away with my friend, Mr Cope. I walked home to the camp by myself and saw my mother-in-law sitting alone, so I told her what I was going to do.'

'Was she surprised?' inquired Poirot.

'Yes, she was very shocked,' said Nadine, 'and she was angry – very angry. After a while I refused to talk to her any more, and walked away.' Her voice became quieter. 'I – I never saw her alive again.'

Poirot nodded his head slowly. 'I see,' he said. 'So you think Mrs Boynton died because of the shock?'

'It seems certain to me,' replied Nadine. 'It was a difficult journey to Petra, and my news – and her anger – killed her.'

'And what exactly did you do when you left Mrs Boynton?' Poirot asked.

'I went down to the marquee. My husband Lennox was there.'

Poirot watched her closely as he asked, 'Did you tell your husband that you had decided to leave him? Or had you already told him?'

There was a very short pause before Nadine said, 'I told him then. He was very upset, but he – he didn't say very much. You see, we both knew that something like this might happen.'

After a long pause, Poirot asked, 'Do you own a syringe, *madame*?'

'Yes – I mean, no,' said Nadine uneasily. 'I do have an old syringe in my luggage, but I left it behind in Jerusalem. Why did you ask me that, Monsieur Poirot?'

Instead of answering, Poirot asked another question. 'Mrs Boynton was taking medicine containing digitalin, for her heart trouble?'

'Yes,' said Nadine. She was answering his questions very carefully now.

'So if Mrs Boynton had taken a big overdose of digitalin –'

Nadine interrupted him quickly and definitely. 'She did not. She was always very careful, and so was I.'

'The chemist who prepared the medicine may have made a mistake. We can analyse what is left in the bottle.'

'Unfortunately the bottle was broken,' said Nadine.

'Indeed. Who broke it?' asked Poirot.

'I don't know – one of the servants, I think. When Mrs Boynton's body was carried into her cave, there was a good deal of confusion and the light was poor – the table fell over.'

Poirot looked at her. 'That,' he said, 'is very interesting.'

Nadine Boynton moved in her chair. 'Do you think Mrs Boynton died of an overdose of digitalin?' she asked. 'It doesn't seem very likely.'

Poirot leaned forward. 'Even when I tell you that some digitalin was missing from Dr Gerard's medicine bag?'

Nadine's face grew pale and she sat very still. 'Monsieur Poirot, I did not kill my mother-in-law – many people can tell you that she was alive and well when I left her. So please, I am asking you to stop your investigation – if you continue you will destroy people's peace and happiness. Can't you say that Mrs Boynton died a natural death?'

Poirot sat up straight and his eyes looked very green. 'Let me be clear, *madame*. You think that Mrs Boynton was murdered, and yet you are asking me to say nothing!'

Nadine said passionately, 'You don't understand – she was evil!'

'I do not care what she was like!' exclaimed Poirot. 'No one has the right to take the life of another person – I will not accept murder! That is the final word of Hercule Poirot.'

Nadine stood up, her dark eyes flashing with sudden fire. 'Then you will ruin the lives of innocent people! I have nothing more to say.'

'But, you do, *madame*. What happened after you left Mrs Boynton, while you and your husband were in the marquee together?'

She looked straight into his eyes. 'I know nothing, Monsieur Poirot.' Nadine turned and left the room.

Chapter 8

After writing N.B. 4.40 on his paper, Poirot looked up to see Carol Boynton enter the room. As she sat down, Poirot looked with interest at Carol's red-brown hair and nervous hands. Her face had no colour or expression.

'Now, *mademoiselle*,' Poirot said, 'will you please tell me what you did that afternoon?'

Carol's answer came quickly, as if she had practised it before. 'After lunch we all went for a walk. I returned to the camp –'

Poirot interrupted. 'Were you all together until then?'

'No, I was with my brother Raymond and Miss King for most of the time. Then I walked off on my own.'

'And what time did you return to the camp?'

'I believe it was just about ten minutes past five.'

Poirot wrote down C.B. 5.10. 'And what then?'

'My mother was still sitting in front of her cave,' said Carol. 'I went up and spoke to her, and then went on to my tent.'

'Can you remember exactly what you both said?'

'I just said it was very hot and that I was going to lie down. My mother said she would stay where she was.'

'Was there anything about her that seemed unusual or different?' asked Poirot.

'No. At least –' Carol paused. 'She was a strange colour – her face was redder than usual.'

'She may have had a shock, perhaps?' suggested Poirot. 'Did she say anything about trouble with one of the servants?'

'No – no, nothing at all.'

Poirot continued, 'And what did you do next, *mademoiselle*?'

'I went to my tent and lay down for about half an hour. Then I went down to the marquee. Lennox and Nadine were there reading. I looked at a magazine.'

'Did you speak to your mother again on your way to the marquee?' asked Poirot.

'No. I went straight down – I didn't even look at her. Then I stayed in the marquee until – until Miss King told us she was dead. That's all I know.'

Poirot leaned forward. 'And what did you feel, *mademoiselle*, when you found that your mother – pardon, your stepmother – was dead?'

Carol said uncertainly, 'It was – a great shock.'

'Was it?'

Carol's face went red. She stared at Poirot helplessly, with fear in her eyes.

'Was it such a great shock, *mademoiselle*? Do you remember a conversation you had with your brother Raymond one night in Jerusalem?' His guess was right – he knew from the way her face went white. 'How do you know about that?' she whispered.

'Part of your conversation was overheard.'

'Oh!' Carol hid her face in her hands and started to cry. Hercule Poirot waited a minute, then he said quietly, 'You were both planning to kill your stepmother.'

Carol sobbed out brokenly, 'We were mad – *mad* – that evening!' She sat up and pushed her hair from her face. 'You don't understand what it was like! Travelling made it so obvious how different we were to other people. And Ginevra – mother was making her worse! Ray and I were afraid that Ginevra was going mad! That evening in Jerusalem, Ray and I were overexcited. We thought that killing mother was the right thing

to do! But we didn't really do it. The next day it seemed stupid – and wrong! Mother died naturally of heart failure. Monsieur Poirot – Ray and I had nothing to do with it.'

'Will you swear to me, *mademoiselle*,' said Poirot quietly, 'that Mrs Boynton did not die as the result of any action of yours?'

Carol lifted her head. 'I swear,' she said steadily, 'that I never harmed her.'

Poirot leaned back in his chair, and thoughtfully stroked his moustache. 'What exactly was your plan?' he asked. In his mind he counted the seconds before Carol answered – one, two, three.

'We didn't have a plan,' said Carol at last. 'We never got that far.'

Poirot stood up. 'That is all, *mademoiselle*. Will you tell your brother to come in next?'

Carol went slowly to the door. 'Monsieur Poirot, you do believe me?' she said passionately. 'I've told you the truth – I *have*!'

Hercule Poirot did not answer, and Carol Boynton went slowly out of the room.

Chapter 9

Poirot noted the family similarity between Carol and her brother when Raymond Boynton came into the room. Raymond's face was serious, but he didn't seem nervous or afraid.

'Your sister Carol has spoken with you?' Poirot asked gently.

Raymond nodded. 'Yes. If you overheard our conversation in Jerusalem I don't blame you for being suspicious. I can only say that the conversation was – was madness! Planning to kill my stepmother – oh, how can I explain? – we were under so much stress that just talking about it made us feel better!'

Hercule Poirot nodded his head slowly. 'That,' he said, 'is possible.'

'In the morning it all seemed – rather stupid! I swear to you, Monsieur Poirot, that I never thought about it again. The facts are that I spoke to my mother just before six o'clock, when she was alive and well. I went to my tent, had a wash and joined the others in the marquee. From that time neither Carol nor I moved – everyone could see us. So my mother's death was natural – heart failure – it couldn't be anything else!'

'But Miss King,' said Poirot quietly, 'said that when she examined the body – at six-thirty – your mother had been dead for at least an hour, if not longer.'

Raymond stared at him, totally shocked. 'Sarah said that?' he gasped. 'But – it's impossible! She must be mistaken! My mother was alive just before six and I spoke to her.' He leaned forward. 'Monsieur Poirot, people die every day – especially people with weak hearts – and there is nothing strange about it. Mother's death only seems suspicious because you overheard what I said.'

Poirot shook his head. 'You are wrong,' he said. 'There is other evidence – poison taken from the medicine bag of Dr Gerard.'

'Poison?' Ray stared at him. '*Poison*?' He looked completely shocked. 'Is that what you suspect?'

Poirot said quietly, 'So your plan was different?'

'Oh, yes.' Raymond answered without thinking. 'This changes everything . . . I – I can't think clearly.'

'What was your plan?'

'Our plan? It was –' Raymond stopped suddenly, and his eyes became wary. 'I don't think,' he said, 'that I'll say any more.'

'As you please,' said Poirot. As he watched the young man leave the room, on his paper he wrote R.B. 5.50. Then he wrote a list.

Boyntons and Jefferson Cope leave the camp	about 3.05
Dr Gerard and Sarah King leave the camp	about 3.15
Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce leave the camp	4.15
Dr Gerard returns to the camp	about 4.20
Lennox Boynton returns to the camp	4.35
Nadine Boynton returns to the camp and talks to Mrs Boynton	4.40
Nadine Boynton leaves Mrs Boynton and goes to the marquee	about 4.50
Carol Boynton returns to the camp	5.10
Lady Westholme, Miss Pierce and Jefferson Cope return to the camp	5.40
Raymond Boynton returns to the camp	5.50
Sarah King returns to the camp	6.00
Mrs Boynton's body is discovered	6.30

Chapter 10

Next Hercule Poirot spoke to the guide, Mahmoud, whose English wasn't very good – but who liked to talk. It was a while before Poirot could ask a question.

'No, I do not think any servants were about at half-past five,' said Mahmoud. 'Lunch is late – two o'clock – and then all afternoon sleep. We all go to sleep by half-past three. At five I get up but no one is there – they all go walking. For me, that is good – I can go back to sleep. At quarter to six trouble begin – large English lady – very important lady – comes back and wants tea. She always complains – says water must be boiling. I have to do it myself. Ah, what a life – what a life! I do all I can – always I am blamed!'

'I have another question,' said Poirot. 'The dead lady was angry with one of the servants. Do you know which servant it was and what it was about?'

'I do not know,' Mahmoud replied, 'Old lady did not complain to me.'

'Could you find out?'

'No, that would be impossible. None of the servants would admit it. If the old lady was angry then naturally they would not tell. Abdul say it was Mohammed, and Mohammed say it was Aziz and Aziz say it was Aissa, and so on.'

Poirot finally managed to escape from Mahmoud, and went to talk to Colonel Carbury in his office. 'Detecting crime is sometimes very easy,' said Poirot. 'All I have to do is let the criminal talk – and he will tell me everything.' Briefly,

Poirot told the Colonel about the interviews he had had that morning.

'Raymond Boynton is definitely the most likely person,' said the Colonel. 'In a detective story he would certainly be innocent!'

'Do you read detective stories?' Poirot asked.

'Thousands of them,' said Colonel Carbury. He added, hopefully, 'Can you write a list of significant facts, like they do in detective stories? You know, facts that don't seem to mean anything but are really very important?'

'Ah,' said Poirot kindly. 'I will do that for you with pleasure.' On a piece of paper he wrote:

Significant facts

1. Mrs Boynton was taking a medicine containing digitalin.
2. Dr Gerard's syringe was missing.
3. Mrs Boynton definitely enjoyed stopping her family having a good time with other people.
4. Mrs Boynton, on the afternoon of her death, encouraged her family to go away and enjoy themselves.
5. Mrs Boynton enjoyed being cruel to people.
6. The distance from the marquee to the place where Mrs Boynton was sitting is about two hundred yards.
7. Lennox Boynton said at first he did not know what time he returned to the camp, but later he admitted setting his mother's watch to the right time.
8. Dr Gerard and Ginevra Boynton were staying in tents next door to each other.
9. At half-past six, when dinner was ready, a servant was sent to tell Mrs Boynton.

'Excellent!' said Colonel Carbury, smiling widely. 'I don't understand it at all. And you mention the servants a few times – I hope one of *them* didn't kill Mrs Boynton. That wouldn't be fair!'

Poirot smiled, but did not answer. As he left the office he said to himself, 'Incredible! The English never grow up!'

Chapter 11

Sarah King was sitting on a hill, picking wild flowers, and Dr Gerard sat on a rough wall of stones near her. Sarah looked up. 'That little man's coming up the hill,' she said 'I suppose he's looking for us.' Poirot reached them at last, wiping his hot forehead, before looking sadly at his expensive leather shoes.

'This stony country!' he said. 'My poor shoes!'

'Why do you wear shoes like that in the desert?' asked Sarah.

'I like to be well-dressed,' Poirot answered.

'Women do not look their best in the desert,' said Dr Gerard thoughtfully. 'Miss King always looks well-dressed, but Lady Westholme wears such thick coats, skirts and boots – and those terrible riding breeches! And poor Miss Pierce – her clothes are so pale and dull, and she wears too much jewellery.'

'I don't think Monsieur Poirot climbed up here to talk about clothes!' said Sarah.

'True,' said Poirot. 'I came to ask you both about Mrs Boynton. I have a feeling that the way her mind worked is very important in this case.'

'From my point of view she was certainly very interesting,' said Dr Gerard. He described his own interest in the Boynton family, and his conversation with Jefferson Cope. 'He had no idea about the hate and unhappiness in the Boynton family,' explained the doctor, 'But I think that on the journey to Petra, Mr Cope was beginning to realize what Mrs Boynton was really like.' He told them what Mr Cope had said about Mrs Boynton's behaviour to the servant and her baby.

'That story about the servant is interesting,' said Poirot thoughtfully. 'It shows how cruel Mrs Boynton could be. But I do not understand – why did Mrs Boynton arrange this trip

abroad, when she knew it would be more difficult to control her family?'

Dr Gerard leaned forward excitedly. 'She was bored!' he exclaimed. 'She needed a new challenge! Mrs Boynton *wanted* her family to rebel, so she could use her power to control them once again.'

Poirot took a deep breath. 'Yes, I see exactly what you mean. Mrs Boynton chose to live dangerously – and now she is dead!'

Just then they saw a girl wandering along the side of the hill. Her red-gold hair shone in the sunlight, and a strange secret smile was on her lovely mouth.

'How beautiful she is,' said Dr Gerard. 'She has a face to dream of, as I once did. When I was ill with malaria I opened my eyes and saw her face – with its sweet strange smile. I was sorry to wake up from my dream.' Then he added, 'That is Ginevra Boynton.'

Chapter 12

A few minutes later Ginevra Boynton reached them, and Dr Gerard introduced her to Hercule Poirot. 'I tried to see you in the hotel, *mademoiselle*,' said Poirot. 'Will you talk to me now?' They walked away from Sarah and Dr Gerard.

'You are – you are a detective, aren't you?' asked Ginevra. 'A very well-known detective?'

'The best detective in the world,' said Poirot, saying it as a simple truth.

'Have you come here to protect me?' Ginevra asked quietly.

Poirot stroked his moustache thoughtfully. 'Are you in danger, *mademoiselle*?'

'Yes, yes – they're trying to kill me!' Ginevra looked around quickly. 'I told Dr Gerard about it in Jerusalem. He was very clever. He didn't say anything but he followed me to Petra. He is kind and good – he's in love with me!' Ginevra's voice became soft and beautiful. 'He says my name in his sleep. I saw him – lying there ill on his bed – saying my name. I went away quietly.' She paused. 'Did Dr Gerard ask you to protect me? There are enemies all around me – sometimes they are in disguise.'

'Yes, yes,' said Poirot gently. 'But you are safe here – with your family.'

'They are *not* my family!' Ginevra said proudly. 'I can't tell you who I really am – it's a secret.'

'Was your mother's death a great shock to you, *mademoiselle*?' Poirot asked gently.

Ginevra stamped her foot angrily. 'She wasn't my mother! My enemies paid her to pretend she was!'

'Where were you on the afternoon of her death?'

'I was in my tent . . . It was hot in there, but I didn't come out in case they killed me . . .' She shivered with fear. 'One of them – looked into my tent. He was in disguise but I knew him. I pretended to be asleep. The Arab prince sent him to kidnap me.'

'They are very romantic, these stories that you invent,' Poirot said.

Ginevra stopped and looked at him angrily. 'They're true! They're *all* true.' Again she stamped her foot, before turning and running down the hillside. Poirot stood looking after her, and in a few minutes he heard a voice close behind him.

'What did you say to her?' asked Dr Gerard, a little out of breath, as Sarah joined them.

Poirot answered the doctor's question. 'And Ginevra was angry?' said Dr Gerard. 'That's good! She still knows that what she says isn't true. When she comes to my clinic in Paris – it is all arranged – I will make her better. Ginevra enjoys acting and drama, and being the centre of attention – like her mother!' He hurried down the hill after Ginevra.

'Ginevra is nothing like that horrible old woman,' said Sarah with a frown, 'although in Jerusalem I once felt sorry for Mrs Boynton myself. I suddenly saw her differently – not evil, but pathetic.' Sarah's face went red as she remembered that meeting. 'I felt so stupid,' she admitted, 'and I felt even more stupid when Lady Westholme said she'd seen me talking to Mrs Boynton. She probably overheard me.'

'What exactly did Mrs Boynton say to you?' Poirot asked. 'Can you remember the exact words?'

'I remember,' replied Sarah, 'because she said it so poisonously – not even looking at me. She said, "I never forget. Remember that. I never forget *anything* – an action, a name or a face . . ."

Then she suddenly asked, 'Monsieur Poirot, have you found out anything definite about Mrs Boynton's death?'

'I have found out that Raymond Boynton spoke to his sister Carol when he talked about killing his mother. He told me that they were both overexcited – and forgot about it the next day.' Then he added gently, 'Miss Sarah, what are you so afraid of?'

Sarah's face was white. 'That afternoon, when he left me, Raymond said he wanted to do something *now* while he had the courage. I thought he meant just to – to tell her. But what if he meant . . .'

Chapter 13

Nadine Boynton was walking with Jefferson Cope along the stony hillside. Her face was pale. 'Jefferson,' she said. 'I've got to talk to you.'

'Of course, Nadine – but don't be upset,' said Mr Cope. 'You must do just as you want.'

'You know what I'm going to say, don't you?' she said with emotion. 'You're so good and kind, Jefferson, and I've treated you so badly.'

'Nadine, you know I love you, but all I want is for you to be happy. When you decided to leave your husband you were honest with me – you didn't say you were in love with me. But I was happy – all I wanted was to look after you.'

'I'm sorry,' said Nadine, 'I'm so sorry, Jefferson.'

'But I somehow thought you'd change your mind. And things are different now – you and Lennox can have a life of your own.'

'Yes – I can't leave Lennox now,' said Nadine quietly. 'Please forgive me.'

'There's nothing to forgive,' said Mr Cope. 'We'll forget about that afternoon and will just be friends.'

Nadine placed a gentle hand on his arm. 'Dear Jefferson, thank you. I'm going to find Lennox now.' She turned and left him. Mr Cope went on alone.

Lennox was so deep in thought that he didn't notice Nadine until she sat down beside him on the hillside. 'We haven't been able to talk until now,' she said. 'But Lennox, I'm not going to leave you now.'

'Were you really going to leave me, Nadine?' Lennox said seriously.

She nodded. 'Yes. I thought it was the only thing I could do. I hoped you would be jealous and follow me.'

'I was so shocked when you said you were going away with Jefferson Cope!' said Lennox. 'Why didn't I leave with you when you asked? When you told me I realized that there was only one thing to do if I didn't want to lose you. I went and –'

'Don't!' said Nadine.

Lennox gave her a quick look. 'I went and – argued with mother. I told her that I chose *you*.' He paused. 'Yes, that's what I said to her.'

Chapter 14

Poirot met two people on his way back to the hotel. The first was Jefferson Cope, who introduced himself, and as they walked together Mr Cope explained, 'I hear you're investigating Mrs Boynton's death. The journey to Petra was too much for her, but she wouldn't listen. As a friend of the family, I'd be happy to take care of anything – such as moving Mrs Boynton's body to Jerusalem. Just let me know if I can help.'

'I am sure the family will thank you for your offer,' said Poirot. He added carefully, 'I believe you are a special friend of Nadine Boynton.'

Jefferson Cope's face went a little pink. 'Nadine told me she'd spoken to you this morning. But that's all over now – Nadine is staying with her husband.'

There was a pause, before Poirot asked, 'Monsieur Cope, can you help me by telling me about the afternoon of Mrs Boynton's death?'

'Of course,' said Mr Cope. 'After lunch and a brief rest we all went for a walk. That was when I talked to Nadine. Afterwards she wanted to talk to Lennox, so I went off on my own and walked back towards the camp. About half-way there I met the two English ladies – Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce. We looked at some ruins, and when we got back to the camp – at about five-forty – I had tea with them. The servants prepared supper and went to tell Mrs Boynton – and found her dead in her chair.'

'Did you notice Mrs Boynton as you walked home?' inquired Poirot.

'I noticed she was there, that's all.'

'Thank you, Monsieur Cope. May I also ask if Mrs Boynton has left a large amount of money?'

'Very large – though it was her husband's money, and is divided between all his children,' explained Mr Cope. 'They will all have a lot of money now.'

'Money,' said Poirot, 'makes a difference. Thank you, Monsieur Cope, for your help.'

While Mr Cope walked on uphill, Poirot walked down until he met Miss Pierce. She greeted him breathlessly. 'Oh, Monsieur Poirot, I'm so glad to meet you. I've been talking to that very peculiar girl, Ginevra Boynton. She told me that there are enemies all around her – and that an Arab prince wants to kidnap her. It sounds so romantic and exciting!'

'Life can indeed be very strange,' said Poirot.

'I didn't realize who you were this morning,' continued Miss Pierce with excitement. 'I've heard all about you! I know I must tell you everything – every small detail! And it *was* rather strange.'

'Please,' said Poirot, 'I would like to hear all about it.'

'Well, it's not much. But I got up early on the day after Mrs Boynton's death, and I saw Carol Boynton come out of her tent and throw something into the stream. I didn't really think about it at the time, but later I walked along the stream and met Miss King. Then I saw a small metal box, and thought "That must be what Carol Boynton threw away". So I picked it up and there was a syringe inside. Then Miss King said, "Oh, thank you – that's my syringe" and took it back to the camp with her.'

Miss Pierce paused and then went on quickly, 'Of course, I'm sure it's not important – but it did seem strange.' She looked hopefully at Poirot.

His face was serious. 'Thank you, *mademoiselle*,' he said. 'What you have said gives me the last piece of information I needed to solve this case! Everything is now clear and in order.'

'Oh, really?' Miss Pierce looked as pleased as a child.

Back in his hotel room Hercule Poirot added one line to his list of significant facts: 10. 'I never forget. Remember that. I never forget *anything*.'

'*Mais oui*,' Poirot said. 'Yes, now it is all clear!'

Chapter 15

Hercule Poirot and Colonel Carbury were standing in one of the empty hotel bedrooms, where Poirot had arranged the furniture. 'It is time to begin,' he said, looking at his watch. 'You, Colonel, must sit behind this table in an official position. Here,' he pointed to some chairs, 'will sit the Boynton family, and over here will sit the three other people who are personally involved in the case – Miss King, Dr Gerard and Monsieur Cope.' He stopped as he heard people arriving. 'Aha – here they come.'

When everyone had sat down, Colonel Carbury began to speak in an official voice. 'When Mrs Boynton's death was reported to me, it seemed a perfectly natural death. However, the evidence of Dr Gerard – a missing syringe, missing poison and a mark on the dead woman's wrist – made me suspicious, so I asked Monsieur Hercule Poirot to investigate. He will now give us his report.'

The Boynton family all looked frightened. There was silence – complete silence. When someone dropped a shoe in the room next door it sounded incredibly loud.

Poirot stepped forward. 'Before I began my investigation,' he said, 'I told Colonel Carbury that I would find the truth – even if I couldn't prove it – by talking to everyone involved. You have all talked to me, and though you have lied, you have also – without knowing it – led me to the truth.

'First, I considered whether Mrs Boynton died a natural death – and decided that she did not. The missing digitalin and syringe – and the Boynton family's behaviour – convinced me that she had been murdered. Not only was Mrs Boynton murdered, but every member of her family knew it! They all acted as if they were guilty, and they all gained – both money and freedom – once she was dead.

'But did the Boyntons work together as a family to kill Mrs Boynton? When I looked at the evidence I decided that they did not. Their stories did not fit together, and no one had a proper alibi. It seemed more likely that two people were working together – and I myself had evidence to add.' Here he told the story of the conversation he had overheard in Jerusalem.

'Of course,' Poirot continued, 'this meant that Raymond Boynton was the obvious suspect. I guessed – correctly – that he had been talking to his sister Carol. They wanted to kill Mrs Boynton to free the whole family, particularly their younger sister, Ginevra.'

Poirot paused, while Raymond Boynton looked at him with pain in his eyes.

'Before I discuss the case against Raymond Boynton, I would like to read to you a list of significant facts, which I wrote for Colonel Carbury.'

Significant facts

1. Mrs Boynton was taking a medicine containing digitalin.
2. Dr Gerard's syringe was missing.
3. Mrs Boynton definitely enjoyed stopping her family having a good time with other people.
4. Mrs Boynton, on the afternoon of her death, encouraged her family to go away and enjoy themselves.
5. Mrs Boynton enjoyed being cruel to people.
6. The distance from the marquee to the place where Mrs Boynton was sitting is about two hundred yards.
7. Lennox Boynton said at first he did not know what time he returned to the camp, but later he admitted setting his mother's watch to the right time.
8. Dr Gerard and Ginevra Boynton were staying in tents next door to each other.

9. At half-past six, when dinner was ready, a servant was sent to tell Mrs Boynton.
10. Mrs Boynton, in Jerusalem, used these words, 'I never forget. Remember that. I never forget *anything*.'

'I thought that the first two facts were incredibly strange – because they do not fit together. Do you see what I mean? If not, it does not matter – I will explain later.

'So is Raymond Boynton guilty or not? These are the facts. He had talked about killing Mrs Boynton. He was in a very nervous and excited state, as he had – *mademoiselle*, please forgive me' – he nodded to Sarah – 'just fallen in love. This may have given Raymond Boynton the courage to rebel against his mother at last – or even kill her!

'Raymond Boynton left the camp with the others at about five minutes past three. Mrs Boynton was then alive and well. Raymond and Sarah King stayed together until he left her, returning to the camp at ten minutes to six. He went and talked to his mother, then went to his tent and afterwards to the marquee. He says that at ten minutes to six Mrs Boynton was alive.

'But Miss King – who is a doctor – says that when she examined Mrs Boynton's body at half-past six, she had been dead for at least an hour – and probably more. So either Miss King or Raymond Boynton is lying!

'Assuming that Miss King was not mistaken and is not lying, let us examine what happened. Raymond Boynton returns to the camp, goes up to his mother and finds she is dead. Instead of calling for help, he waits for a few minutes, goes first to his tent, then joins his family in the marquee – and says nothing. Why would he behave like that?'

'I wouldn't,' said Raymond in a sharp, nervous voice. 'That proves that my mother was alive and well.'

Poirot ignored Raymond's interruption. 'If his mother was already dead when he returned to camp, Raymond Boynton cannot be guilty. But if he is *not* guilty, can we explain his behaviour?

'I believe that we can – remember Raymond's words to his sister Carol. He returns from his walk and finds his mother dead. He immediately suspects that Carol has killed Mrs Boynton.'

'It's a lie,' said Raymond in a low, shaking voice.

'So is there any evidence that Carol Boynton is the murderer?' Poirot continued. 'Carol has talked to her brother Raymond about killing her mother. She returned to the camp at ten minutes past five, when she says she went up and spoke to her mother. There were no witnesses. The camp was empty – the servants were asleep, and Lady Westholme, Miss Pierce and Monsieur Cope were exploring ruins. The time would fit. It is perfectly possible that Carol Boynton killed her mother.' He paused. Carol had raised her head, and she looked at him sadly.

'There is one other point,' said Poirot. 'The following morning, very early, Carol Boynton threw something into the stream – a syringe.'

Dr Gerard looked up, surprised. 'But my syringe was returned,' he said.

Poirot nodded. 'Yes, but this is a second, different syringe. It belongs to Miss King, does it not?

Carol spoke quickly, before Sarah had time to answer. 'It wasn't Miss King's syringe,' she said. 'It was mine, and I threw it away.'

'Carol!' exclaimed Nadine, her eyes wide and upset. '*Carol* – Oh, I don't understand!'

Carol turned and looked at her, slightly angrily. 'I threw away an old syringe, that's all. I never touched the – the poison.'

'It was my syringe, Monsieur Poirot,' added Sarah.

Poirot smiled. 'It is very confusing, this affair of the syringe – but I can explain it. Ah, well, we have now discussed the innocence of Raymond Boynton, and the guilt of his sister Carol. But I am always fair, so now we will see if Carol Boynton could be innocent.

'Carol returns to the camp, goes up to her mother, and finds that she is dead! At once she suspects that her brother Raymond has killed her. She doesn't know what to do – so she says nothing. An hour later Raymond Boynton returns, finds his mother dead but does not say anything either. Perhaps Carol goes to Raymond's tent and finds a syringe. Carol is now sure her brother has killed Mrs Boynton! She takes the syringe and hides it, and early the next morning throws it into the stream.

'There is one point to show that Carol Boynton is innocent. When I question her I ask her to swear that Mrs Boynton did not die because of her – and Carol swears immediately. But she says, "*I* never harmed her" and thinks that I will not notice.

'That is the case for the innocence of Carol Boynton. And now let us go back a step and consider not the innocence but the possible guilt of Raymond. If Carol is speaking the truth, and Mrs Boynton was alive at five-ten, can Raymond be guilty? He could have killed his mother at ten minutes to six when he went up to speak to her. There were servants around, but it was getting dark. But if this is so, then Miss King must have lied. Remember, she came back to the camp only five minutes after Raymond. From the distance she could see him go up to his mother. When Mrs Boynton is found dead, Miss King realizes that Raymond has killed her, and she lies to save him – knowing that Dr Gerard is ill and cannot say anything different!'

'I did not lie!' said Sarah clearly.

'There is yet another possibility', said Poirot. 'Miss King returned to the camp a few minutes after Raymond. Perhaps *she* injected Mrs Boynton with poison. She believed that Mrs Boynton deserved to die. This would explain why she lied about the time of death.'

Sarah had become very pale, but her voice was steady. 'It's true that I once spoke about death and sacrifice,' she said, 'but I swear that I didn't kill Mrs Boynton.'

'And yet,' said Poirot softly, 'one of you two is lying.'

Raymond Boynton moved in his chair. 'You win, Monsieur Poirot!' he said excitedly. '*I* was lying. Mother was dead when I went up to her. I was all ready to tell her I was leaving, and there she was – dead! Her hand was cold. And like you said, I thought maybe Carol had done it – there was the mark on her wrist –'

'There is one thing I would like to know,' said Poirot quickly. 'How did you plan to kill your mother? I know it involved a syringe, but if you want me to believe you, you must tell me everything.'

'I was going to use an empty syringe in a vein,' Raymond said. 'I read about it in a book – a detective story.'

'Ah,' said Poirot. 'I understand. Did you buy a syringe?'

'No,' said Raymond, 'I took Nadine's.'

Poirot looked at Nadine Boynton. 'Is that the syringe that is in your luggage in Jerusalem?' he asked. Nadine's face reddened slightly. 'I – I wasn't sure where it was,' she replied.

'You think very quickly, *madame*,' said Poirot.

Chapter 16

After a pause, Poirot continued. 'We have now solved the mystery of the second syringe. It belonged to Nadine Boynton, was taken by Raymond Boynton before leaving Jerusalem, and was taken from Raymond by Carol after the discovery of Mrs Boynton's dead body. After Carol threw the syringe away, it was found by Miss Pierce and Miss King said it was hers. I believe Miss King has it now.'

'I have,' said Sarah.

'So you lied when you said it was yours.'

Sarah said calmly, 'That's a different kind of lie. It isn't – it isn't a *professional* lie.'

Poirot cleared his throat. 'Let us now review our time-table.

Boyntons and Jefferson Cope leave the camp	about 3.05
Dr Gerard and Sarah King leave the camp	about 3.15
Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce leave the camp	4.15
Dr Gerard returns to the camp	about 4.20
Lennox Boynton returns to the camp	4.35
Nadine Boynton returns to the camp and talks to Mrs Boynton	4.40
Nadine Boynton leaves Mrs Boynton and goes to the marquee	about 4.50
Carol Boynton returns to the camp	5.10
Lady Westholme, Miss Pierce and Jefferson Cope return to the camp	5.40
Raymond Boynton returns to the camp	5.50
Sarah King returns to the camp	6.00
Mrs Boynton's body is discovered	6.30

'As you can see, there is a space of twenty minutes between four-fifty when Nadine left Mrs Boynton and five-ten when Carol returned. So if Carol is speaking the truth, Mrs Boynton must have been killed in that twenty minutes.

'Now who could have killed her? At that time Miss King and Raymond Boynton were together. Mr Cope was with Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce. Lennox Boynton was with his wife in the marquee, and Dr Gerard was lying ill in his tent. The camp is empty and the servants are asleep. Could anyone have committed the crime at this moment?'

He looked thoughtfully at Ginevra Boynton. 'There is one person. Ginevra Boynton said that she was in her tent all afternoon, but that is not true. She also said that Dr Gerard spoke her name when he was ill, while Dr Gerard said that he dreamed of Ginevra Boynton's face. But it was not a dream! He really saw her, standing there by his bed. So Ginevra was in Dr Gerard's tent. Was she returning Dr Gerard's syringe after killing her mother?'

Ginevra Boynton raised her head with its red-gold hair, her beautiful eyes staring at Poirot.

'That's impossible!' said Nadine excitedly.

Poirot leaned forward. 'You are very intelligent, *madame*,' he said to Nadine.

'What do you mean by that, Monsieur Poirot?' asked Nadine quietly.

'I mean that the whole time you have judged the situation calmly. You realized that you and your husband Lennox had to leave Mrs Boynton if you were going to enjoy a happy life. But you could not persuade Lennox to go. Your husband was too exhausted to do anything.

'So, because you love Lennox, you told him you were leaving with Jefferson Cope to make him jealous – to make him do something. But if that failed, the only other thing that might save Lennox was if his mother died, leaving him with money – and freedom!'

Nadine stared at Poirot. 'I didn't kill Mrs Boynton,' she said gently. 'After I had told her that I was leaving, I went straight to the marquee and joined Lennox. I did not leave it again until Mrs Boynton was found dead, and had no opportunity to kill her.'

'You did not leave the marquee again until Mrs Boynton was found dead,' repeated Poirot. 'That is one of the points I found strange – it is number nine on my list – "At half-past six, when dinner was ready, a servant was sent to tell Mrs Boynton".'

'I don't understand,' said Raymond.

Poirot looked at the Boyntons. '"A servant was sent",' he said. 'Why a servant? You did everything for Mrs Boynton – helped her walk, get up from her chair – one of you was always with her! So I asked myself – why did no one go to help her? And I tell you my answer – because you knew that she was dead!'

'No, no, do not interrupt me, *madame*,' he said to Nadine as she tried to speak. 'You will now listen to *me* – Hercule Poirot! You have decided to kill Mrs Boynton, so you take Dr Gerard's digitalin in the morning, and his syringe – since yours had disappeared. You hoped to put back the syringe before the doctor noticed it was missing.

'You return to the camp, talking politely to Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce as you pass. You go up to Mrs Boynton with the syringe full of digitalin, ready. You hold her wrist and quickly inject the poison – it is easy for someone who trained as a nurse.

From far down below Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce see you talking to Mrs Boynton for about ten minutes, but they cannot *hear* – they are too far away. You are talking to a dead woman. Then you go to the marquee, join your husband, and are careful not to leave. Mrs Boynton's death will be blamed on her heart trouble. But Dr Gerard is ill in his tent, so you cannot return the syringe – that, *madame*, was the only thing wrong with your perfect crime.'

There was silence, until Lennox Boynton jumped to his feet. '*No*!' he shouted. 'That's a lie. Nadine did nothing. She *couldn't* have done anything. My mother – my mother was already dead.'

'Ah?' Poirot looked at him gently. 'So *you* killed her, Mr Boynton.'

Lennox sat down in his chair and raised shaking hands to his face. 'Yes – that's right – I killed her. I took the poison from Dr Gerard's tent.'

'When?' asked Poirot.

'As – as – you said – in the morning.'

'And the syringe?'

'The syringe? Yes.'

'Why did you kill her?'

'You – you know why! My wife was leaving me – with Cope –'

'Yes, but you only heard about that in the afternoon.'

Lennox stared at him. 'Of course. When we were out –'

'But you took the poison and the syringe in the morning – before you knew?' asked Poirot.

'What does it matter?' said Lennox, pale and shaking.

'It matters a great deal,' said Poirot. 'I advise you to tell me the truth.'

'All right, I will,' said Lennox suddenly. 'But I don't know if you'll believe me.' He breathed in deeply. 'That afternoon, I

was – I was nearly mad! I never thought Nadine would leave me. I felt as though I was drunk or ill.'

Poirot nodded. 'Lady Westholme told me you were walking as if you were dizzy,' he said. 'That is why I knew your wife Nadine had told you she was leaving *before* – not after – you returned to the camp.'

'I hardly knew what I was doing,' continued Lennox. 'Then I realized it was all my fault and I should have escaped from mother years ago. I decided to go and tell her just what I thought – and that I was leaving with Nadine that night.'

'Oh, Lennox – my dear –' sighed Nadine.

'And then,' said Lennox, 'she was just sitting there – *dead*! I didn't know what to do – I was shocked – and confused. Without thinking I picked up her watch and put it on her wrist. Then I went down to the marquee. I should have called someone, but I just sat there, staring at a newspaper. I don't know why I didn't tell anyone.'

Dr Gerard cleared his throat. 'You were in a bad nervous state, Mr Boynton,' he said. 'You were too shocked to do anything – it is a known medical condition.'

'Oh, I am sure it is,' replied Poirot. 'But Nadine Boynton saw her husband put back his mother's watch – she returned to the camp only five minutes later. When she found Mrs Boynton dead, with the mark of a syringe on her wrist, she thought that Lennox Boynton had killed his mother and put back the watch to hide the mark – because she said she was leaving him.' He turned to Nadine. 'Am I right, *madame*?'

Nadine nodded her head. Then she asked, 'Did you really suspect me, Monsieur Poirot?'

'I thought you were a possibility, *madame*.'

'And now,' said Nadine, 'tell us what really happened.'

Chapter 17

Poirot now seemed friendly and relaxed as he sat down. 'In a few days – after the medical examination – we will know if Mrs Boynton died of an overdose of digitalin or not. But it is better to know the truth tonight, before the murderer can escape!

'So now we return to my list of facts – and why the first two points do not fit together. Mrs Boynton was taking a medicine containing digitalin and Dr Gerard's syringe was missing. It is a clever idea to kill Mrs Boynton with digitalin, as she was already taking the drug in her medicine. But why would someone in her family inject the poison with a syringe? It would be much easier to add the poison to Mrs Boynton's medicine! Sooner or later Mrs Boynton would take her medicine and die, and even if the digitalin was discovered in the bottle it could have been an accident – or a mistake by the chemist who prepared it. Nothing could be proved!

'So why was Dr Gerard's syringe taken? If the murderer could not poison the medicine, he was an *outsider* – and not a member of the Boynton family. This puzzled me, because all the Boyntons acted as if they were guilty. But what if they were really innocent?

'So now I considered how the murder could have been committed by an outsider – someone who did not know Mrs Boynton well enough to enter her cave or touch her medicine bottle.'

He paused. 'There are three people here who are outsiders, but who are still involved in the case.

'Mr Cope is a family friend. Did he have a motive to kill Mrs Boynton? I do not think so, since Mrs Boynton's death has ended his hopes with Nadine Boynton.'

Mr Cope said with dignity, 'I had no opportunity to commit this crime, Monsieur Poirot – and I don't agree with the taking of human life.'

'You certainly *seem* to be innocent,' said Poirot. 'In a detective story you would definitely be the obvious suspect!'

He turned a little in his chair. 'Now, Miss King had a motive and medical knowledge, but since she left the camp at three-fifteen and did not return until six, it is difficult to see when she could have committed the crime.

'Next we must consider Dr Gerard, and think carefully about *when* the murder was actually committed. Lennox Boynton says that his mother was dead at four thirty-five. According to Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce, she was alive at four-fifteen when they started their walk. That leaves exactly twenty minutes. Now, as the two ladies walked away from the camp, Dr Gerard passed them going towards it. No one knows what Dr Gerard did when he reached the camp – he could have committed the crime then. Since he is a doctor, he could easily pretend to have malaria. Perhaps he killed Mrs Boynton to save the young and beautiful Ginevra from mental illness.'

'Your ideas,' said Dr Gerard, 'are unbelievable!'

Without taking any notice, Poirot continued. 'But if Dr Gerard killed Mrs Boynton, why did he tell Colonel Carbury about the digitalin and the syringe? It was thought that Mrs Boynton died of natural causes, but it was Dr Gerard who first suggested the possibility of murder. That, my friends,' said Poirot, 'does not make sense!'

'It doesn't seem to,' agreed Colonel Carbury.

'There is one more possibility,' said Poirot. 'Nadine Boynton said that Ginevra could not have killed her mother – because she knew Mrs Boynton was already dead. But Ginevra Boynton

was at the camp all afternoon. And there was just time for her to commit the crime – when Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce were walking away from the camp and before Dr Gerard returned.'

Ginevra looked at Poirot with an innocent, puzzled stare. 'You think I did it?' Then suddenly, with a quick and beautiful movement, she sat at Dr Gerard's feet and looked passionately up into his face. 'No, *no*, it's not true! I never did anything! They are my enemies – they want to put me in prison. You must help me!'

'There, there, my child.' Gently the doctor patted Ginevra's head. 'What you say is nonsense,' he said to Poirot. 'If Ginevra had killed her mother she would have done it boldly, with drama. This crime was very clever and well planned.'

Poirot smiled. 'I agree with you,' he said smoothly.

Chapter 18

'Come,' said Hercule Poirot. 'We are nearly there! We have heard the facts, but now we must look at the most important thing in this case – Mrs Boynton herself, and how her mind worked.

'Points three and four on my list of facts definitely do not fit together. Mrs Boynton definitely enjoyed stopping her family having a good time with other people – and yet Mrs Boynton, on the afternoon of her death, encouraged her family to go away and enjoy themselves. Why?

'Mrs Boynton has been described in many ways – evil, cruel, controlling, mad! But I think Sarah King came closest to the truth, when she looked at Mrs Boynton and thought she was pathetic. All her life Mrs Boynton wanted power and control over other people. But what did she achieve? In the end she had no real power – all she did was control her own family. Travelling abroad made her realize how unimportant she really was.

'And now we come to point number ten – the words Mrs Boynton spoke to Sarah King in Jerusalem. Sarah King had told Mrs Boynton that she was pathetic – and the old woman knew it was true. Miss King said that Mrs Boynton answered her "so poisonously – not even looking at me". But listen carefully – what did Mrs Boynton *say*? "I never forget. Remember that. I never forget *anything* – an action, a name or a face . . ."

'Do you realize the importance of these words?' Poirot waited a moment. 'It seems not... But, *mes amis*, they were not a proper answer to what Miss King had just said – they do not make any sense!

'It is obvious,' continued Poirot excitedly, 'that those words *were not spoken to Miss King* – they were spoken to someone else standing behind her!'

He paused, looking round him. 'Mrs Boynton has just been told she is pathetic, and realizes that it is true. But just at that moment she recognizes someone – a face from the past – and a new victim, an outsider!

'So now we know why Mrs Boynton let her family go on the afternoon of her death. She was planning to speak to her new victim!

'In the afternoon the Boynton family go for a walk, and Mrs Boynton sits up by her cave. Now let us consider very carefully the evidence of Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce. Miss Pierce is not a good witness – she does not notice much and you can suggest ideas to her that she later says are true. Lady Westholme, however, is very clear about facts and notices everything. Both ladies agree on one fact! A Bedouin servant approaches Mrs Boynton, angers her in some way and quickly leaves. Miss Pierce said that the servant had first been into the tent of Ginevra Boynton, but I think that the servant went into the tent of Dr Gerard, as it was next door.'

'Are you saying that one of the camp servants injected the old lady with poison?' said Colonel Carbury. 'I don't believe it!'

'Wait! I have not yet finished,' said Poirot. 'So, the Bedouin servant came from Dr Gerard's tent and not that of Ginevra Boynton. Now both ladies agree that they could not see the servant's face clearly, and that they did not hear what was said. That is understandable, because the distance between the marquee and the ridge was about two hundred yards. Lady Westholme described the man clearly, including his torn breeches and untidy puttees.'

Poirot leaned forward. 'But that, my friends, was very odd indeed! Because if Lady Westholme could not see the face of the servant or hear what was said, she could not possibly have

noticed what his breeches and puttees looked like from two hundred yards away!

'So why did Lady Westholme describe the clothes of the servant in such detail? Was it because they did not really exist? When Lady Westholme and Miss Pierce both saw the man, they could not see each other from where they were sitting. That fact is clear because Lady Westholme had to come and see if Miss Pierce was awake and found her sitting in the entrance of her tent.'

'My dear Poirot,' said Colonel Carbury, suddenly sitting up very straight. 'Are you suggesting –?'

'I am suggesting that after visiting Miss Pierce (the only witness who was awake), Lady Westholme returned to her tent, put on her riding breeches, boots and coat and made herself a Bedouin *cheffiyah* by wrapping a piece of fabric round her head. Then she went boldly into the tent of Dr Gerard, took his syringe and filled it up with digitalin, and walked straight up to her victim – who may have been asleep.

'Lady Westholme was quick. She held the wrist of Mrs Boynton and injected the poison. Mrs Boynton half cried out and tried to stand up – then sat back in her chair. The "Bedouin servant" left quickly, as if he was afraid. Mrs Boynton shook her stick and called out after him, but she could not stand up by herself.

'Five minutes later Lady Westholme goes back to Miss Pierce and talks to her about Mrs Boynton and the servant, carefully telling her own version of what just happened so Miss Pierce will begin to think that is what she really saw. Then they go for a walk, pausing below the ridge where Lady Westholme shouts up to the old lady. There is no answer – Mrs Boynton is dead. But Lady Westholme says to Miss Pierce, "She was very rude just to grunt at us like that!" Lady Westholme knows that her own strong personality can influence Miss Pierce. Miss Pierce accepts

the suggestion, and will swear quite sincerely that she actually heard Mrs Boynton grunt. The only thing that went wrong was that Lady Westholme did not have time to put back the syringe before Dr Gerard returned to his tent. She hoped he would not notice that the syringe was missing, and she put it back during the night.' He stopped.

'But *why*?' said Sarah. 'Why did Lady Westholme kill Mrs Boynton?'

'You told me that Lady Westholme was standing near you in Jerusalem when you spoke to Mrs Boynton. Mrs Boynton's words – "I never forget. Remember that. I never forget *anything* – an action, a name or a face . . ." – were spoken to Lady Westholme. Mrs Boynton had once worked in a prison in America – and Lord Westholme met his wife on a ship travelling from America. Before her marriage Lady Westholme had been a criminal and had been locked up in prison – though we don't yet know why.

'But Mrs Boynton recognized Lady Westholme and knew she was a criminal. At last she had real power! If she told anyone, Lady Westholme would lose everything – her career, her marriage and her important position in society! And Mrs Boynton liked being cruel – she would enjoy revealing the truth and ruining Lady Westholme's life. So while Mrs Boynton lived, Lady Westholme was not safe. She did what Mrs Boynton wanted and met her at Petra, where Lady Westholme saw her chance and boldly committed her crime. She made only two mistakes. One was to say too much – describing the torn breeches – which first made me suspect her, and the other was when she went into the wrong tent. Instead of going to Dr Gerard's tent she first looked into Ginevra's, where the girl was lying half asleep. When Ginevra

spoke of a man in disguise sent to kidnap her, there was enough truth in her story for me to understand what had happened.'

He paused. 'But we shall soon know. Today I managed to get the fingerprints of Lady Westholme without her knowing. When these are sent to the prison where Mrs Boynton worked, we will know the truth.'

He stopped. In the brief silence a loud noise was heard – like a gun being fired.

'It was in the next room!' said Colonel Carbury, rising quickly to his feet. 'Who's staying there?'

'I believe,' said Poirot quietly, 'it is the room of Lady Westholme . . .'

Epilogue

From the newspaper the *Evening Shout*:

We regret to announce the death of Lady Westholme, MP, after a terrible accident. While travelling abroad, Lady Westholme was cleaning her gun, when it accidentally fired and killed her immediately. We would like to offer our deepest sympathy to her husband, Lord Westholme.

Five years later, Sarah Boynton was sitting with her husband Raymond at the Savoy Hotel in London. With them sat Ginevra, who earlier in the evening had been acting in a very successful play, and Dr Theodore Gerard. Nadine, and a happy-looking Lennox, sat across the table.

'It's so nice to be together!' said Nadine. 'I'm glad we came. And I think our children are old enough to see their Aunt Ginevra acting on stage, don't you, Lennox?'

Just then a well-dressed man with a superb moustache stopped at their table. Hercule Poirot smiled at them happily. 'So everything is well with the Boynton family?'

'Yes, thanks to you,' said Sarah. 'Did you know that Carol has married Jefferson Cope? And Ginevra – Ginevra's a great actress!'

And Ginevra, with a serious look on her beautiful face, said unexpectedly, 'Poor mother. Now we're all so happy, I feel sorry for her. She didn't get what she wanted from life – it must have been hard for her . . .'

Character list

Hercule Poirot: the famous Belgian detective, who is on holiday

Mrs Boynton: an old woman from America, who has lots of money and is travelling with her family

Lennox Boynton: the elder stepson of Mrs Boynton, who is married to Nadine

Nadine Boynton: a distant relative of the Boyntons, who is married to Lennox

Raymond (Ray) Boynton: the younger stepson of Mrs Boynton

Carol Boyton: the elder stepdaughter of Mrs Boynton

Ginevra Boynton: the younger daughter of Mrs Boynton

Sarah King: a young woman who has just qualified to be a doctor

Dr Theodore Gerard: a famous French doctor

Jefferson Cope: an American friend of the Boynton family, who knew Nadine before she was married

Lady Westholme: a well-known British Member of Parliament

Miss Amabel Pierce: a middle-aged woman, who used to teach very young children before she could afford to travel

Mahmoud: a tourist guide, who looks after people travelling to and staying at Petra

Colonel Carbury: the person in charge of running the local area that includes Petra

Cultural notes

Palestine and Trans-Jordan

This story takes place in Palestine and Trans-Jordan in the 1930s, and in the early twentieth century there were many political changes in this area.

For hundreds of years before World War I (1914–1918) most of the countries in this area had been controlled by powerful Turkish rulers, called sultans. The whole area of land they controlled was called the Ottoman Empire.

After the end of World War I in 1918, the League of Nations (the international body that preceded the United Nations) decided that Britain and France would jointly control the region. Trans-Jordan (modern Jordan) and the newly-created Palestine, where most of the story takes place, were controlled by the British.

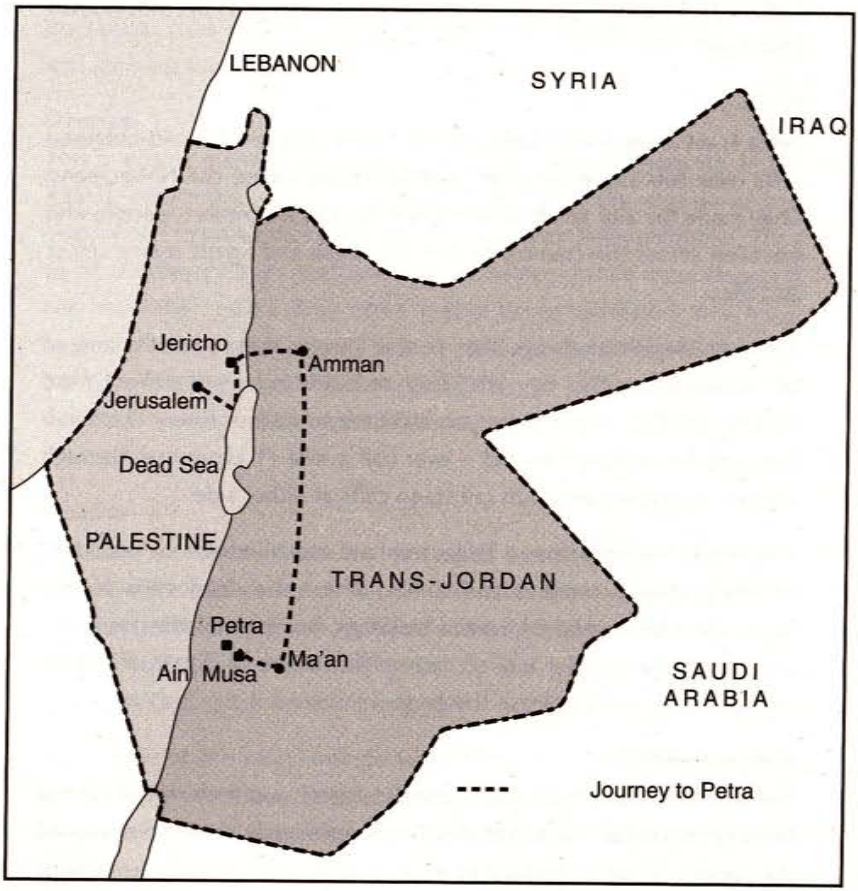
At the time of the story, the British army was still based in the area, and was responsible for administration and foreign affairs. This is why Colonel Carbury is in charge of the local area around Amman, and is responsible for dealing with the death of an American citizen.

Sights on the journey to Petra

Even today it can be a long journey to reach Petra, and at the time of the story only a few adventurous tourists made the difficult journey across the desert. On the way to Petra, Sarah King and her travelling companions visit the Dead Sea, Jericho and Amman.

The story starts in the historic city of Jerusalem, where there are many famous religious buildings. The next stop is the Dead Sea – famous for its warm salty water. It has ten times more salt than normal seawater. The salt makes it very easy for people to swim and float in the Dead Sea.

Map of British-controlled 'Palestine' and 'Trans-Jordan' in the 1930s, showing the route taken by Poirot and his travelling companions



The cities of Jericho and Amman (the capital of modern Jordan) are two of the oldest cities in the world – people have been living there for thousands of years. There are many interesting things to see in both cities, including museums and the remains of old Roman buildings.

Petra

Petra is an ancient and beautiful city, built into the tall red-coloured cliffs over two thousand years ago by people called the Nabataeans. They made the city an important place to stop for traders, people who travelled across the country from China, India and Egypt selling spices and silks.

Although there have always been people living in Petra since the time of the Nabataeans, the city was only rediscovered by travellers from Europe in 1812. To get there you still have to walk or ride – like Sarah King and her companions did – over half a mile (1 kilometre) through the Siq, a narrow valley with tall steep cliffs at either side.

The city is spread across a large area and has hundreds of buildings, including streets, temples and tombs, where the dead were buried. There are also remains of Roman buildings, an open-air theatre and a religious monastery – and of course the 'Place of Sacrifice', where animals were killed to please the gods.

Bedouin people

Bedouin are Arab people who live in the desert, and their way of life has been going on for thousands of years. Traditionally they travel around the desert, living in tents and looking after their animals – camels, horses and sometimes sheep.

Bedouin are used to the hot and dry desert conditions, and their clothes are designed to protect them from the hot sun and keep out the sand. They often wrap a piece of cloth around their heads, called a *cheffiyah*,

and they wrap their lower legs in long thin pieces of cloth to protect them when they are riding – these are called *puttees.*

In the story, local Bedouin people are employed in the camp at Petra to do various jobs, such as preparing the food, looking after the horses and showing tourists around.

Divorce

This is when a married couple legally and permanently separate. In the 1930s, before the law was changed in 1937, a couple who wanted to divorce had to prove that the husband or wife had been unfaithful. They could not divorce by mutual agreement. One person had to be innocent, and the other guilty. This often meant being witnessed in a hotel bedroom with another person, so that evidence could be given in court. Lady Westholme would have regarded this as particularly unfair for women, who were much more dependent on their husband for money than today.

Malaria

Malaria is a serious disease that is carried by mosquitoes, small flying insects which feed on human blood. The disease is common in hot and wet parts of the world such as Africa and Asia. Bad cases of malaria can affect the brain, and even today the disease kills nearly one million people throughout the world every year.

At the time of the story, malaria was treated by a drug called quinine. Most people who have the disease get better. However, if you have had malaria once, the disease can come back from time to time, and needs to be treated again.

Digitalin

Digitalin is a drug that is obtained from a plant called the foxglove. The plant is poisonous to humans and animals, and some types of the plant can cause death if the leaves, roots or seeds are eaten.

The drug is used to help treat people with bad hearts. However, care must be taken not to take too much of the drug, as this can cause death by poisoning. Dangerous and poisonous drugs are now controlled much more carefully than they were when the story was written, and are not used so often.

Glossary

Key
n = noun
v = verb
phr v = phrasal verb
adj = adjective
adv = adverb
excl = exclamation
exp = expression

affair (n)
an event, when you are talking about it in a general way

alibi (n)
proof that you were somewhere else when a crime was committed

archaeologist (n)
someone who studies the past by examining the remains of things such as buildings, tools, and other objects

beige (adj)
pale brown in colour

bitterly (adv)
in an angry and resentful way

boldly (adv)
in a way that shows you are not afraid to do things that involve risk or danger

breathlessly (adv)
if you do something breathlessly, you have difficulty in breathing properly, for example, because you have been running or because you are afraid or excited

breeches (n)
an old word for a kind of short pants

carve (v)
to cut an object out of wood or stone

case (n)
a crime or mystery that the police are investigating

chatter (n)
quick and continuous talk about unimportant things

comb (v)
make your hair neat using a comb – a flat piece of plastic or metal with narrow, pointed teeth along one side

courage (n)
the quality shown by someone who does something difficult or dangerous, even though they may be afraid

crossly (adv)
in an angry or irritated way

cruel (adj)
someone who is cruel deliberately causes pain or distress to people or animals

curious (adj)
when you are interested in something and want to know more about it

dazed (adj)
confused and unable to think clearly

determined (adj)
when you have made a firm decision to do something and will not let anything stop you

devote yourself to (v)
if you devote yourself to someone, you spend all or most of your time or energy on them

digitalin (n)
a medicine for the heart made from a common plant

disguise (n)
if you are in disguise, you are not wearing your usual clothes or you have changed your appearance, so that people will not recognize you

dizzy (adj)
when you feel that you are losing your balance and are about to fall

dose (n)
the amount of a medicine or a drug that should be taken at one time

downhill (adv)
down a slope or near the bottom of a hill

drunk (adj)
when someone has drunk so much alcohol that they cannot speak clearly or behave sensibly

dull (adj)
less intense, bright, or lively

duty (n)
something that you believe you ought to do because it is your responsibility

efficient (adj)
when someone is able to do tasks successfully, without wasting time or energy

epilogue (n)
the last part of a story that gives an opinion or makes a statement about the whole story

evidence (n)
information from documents, objects, or witnesses which is used in a court of law to try to **prove** something

evil (adj)
if you describe something or someone as evil, you mean that you think they are morally very bad and cause harm to people

exhausted (adj)
very tired

expert (adj)
using advice or help that is given by someone who has studied a subject thoroughly or who is very skilled at a particular job

fabric (n)
cloth produced by weaving together cotton, silk, or other threads

force (v)
when someone makes you do something even though you do not want to

fountain (n)
an ornamental feature in a pool or lake which consists of a jet of water that is forced up into the air by a pump

frown (v)
to move your eyebrows together because you are annoyed, worried, or thinking

gain (v)
if you gain something, you obtain it, and usually you get some advantage from it

gasp (v)
when you take a short, quick breath through your mouth, especially when you are surprised, shocked, or in pain

go on (phr)
continue

grunt (n)
a low, rough noise that you usually make because you are annoyed or not interested in something

guilty (adj)
if someone is guilty of a crime or offence, they have committed that crime or offence

habit (n)
something that you do often or regularly

hay fever (n)
if someone is suffering from hay fever, they sneeze and their eyes itch, because they are allergic to certain kinds of grass, trees, or flowers

heart failure (n)
a serious medical condition in which someone's heart does not work as well as it should, or stops completely

heartless (adj)
when someone does not feel any pity, sympathy, or understanding for people who are suffering

ignore (v)
to pay no attention to someone or something

in charge (phr)
responsible for someone or something

indecisive (adj)
when someone finds it very difficult to make decisions

influence (v)
to affect what a person does, or what happens in a situation

inherit (v)
to receive money from someone who has died

inject (v)
when you put a medicine or drug into your body using a device with a needle called a **syringe**

innocent (adj)
if someone is innocent, they did not commit the crime which they were accused of

kidnap (v)
to take someone away illegally and by force, and usually to hold them prisoner in order to demand something from their family, employer, or government

lounge (n)
in a hotel, club, or other public place, a lounge is a room where people can sit and relax

malaria (n)
a serious disease carried by mosquitoes, which causes periods of fever

mark (n)
a small area of something such as dirt that has accidentally got onto a surface or piece of clothing

marquee (n)
a large tent which is used at a fair, garden party, or other outdoor event, usually for eating and drinking in

masterful (adj)
when someone acts as if they are the master and have power over other people

Member of Parliament (n)
a person who has been elected by the people in a particular area to represent them in a country's parliament – the group of people who make or change a country's laws

method (n)
a particular way of doing something

motive (n)
the reason for doing something

nerves (n)
if you refer to someone's nerves, you mean their ability to cope with problems such as stress, worry, and danger

nonsense (n)
something that you think is untrue or silly

outsider (n)
someone who does not belong to a particular group or organization

overdose (n)
if someone takes an overdose of a drug, they take more of it than is safe

overhear (v)
to hear what someone is saying when they are not talking to you and they do not know that you are listening

passionately (adv)
with very strong feelings about something or a strong belief in something

pathetic (adj)
when someone is sad and weak or helpless, and they make you feel very sorry for them

pause (n)
a short period when something stops before it continues again

poisonous (adj)
something that will kill you or harm you if you swallow or absorb it

pretend (v)
try to make people believe that something is true, although in fact it is not

prison (n)
a building where criminals are kept as punishment

proof (n)
a fact, argument, or piece of **evidence** which shows that something is true or exists

prove (v)
to show that something is true or exists

pulse (n)
the regular beating of blood through your body, which you can feel when you touch particular parts of your body, especially your **wrist**

puttees (n)
an Indian word for pieces of clothing which cover your leg from knee to ankle

puzzled (adj)
when you do not understand something and feel confused

quinine (n)
a strong medicine with a bitter taste, often used to treat **malaria**

reason (n)
the ability that people have to think and to make sensible judgements

rebel (v)
when someone starts to behave differently from other people and reject the values of society or of their parents

relief (n)
when you feel happy because something unpleasant has not happened or is no longer happening

rescue (v)
when you get someone out of a dangerous or unpleasant situation

ridge (n)
a long, narrow piece of raised land

ruin (v)
severely harm, damage, or spoil something

ruins (n)
the parts of a (sometimes very old) building that remain after the rest has fallen down or been destroyed

sacrifice (n)
when you kill an animal or person in a special religious ceremony as an offering to a god

say out loud (phr)
to speak so that other people can hear you

schizophrenia (n)
a serious mental illness. People who suffer from it are unable to relate their thoughts and feelings to what is happening around them.

shake (v)
to move from side to side or up and down with quick, small movements

shiver (v)
when your body shakes slightly because you are cold or frightened

sigh (v)
to let out a deep breath, as a way of expressing feelings such as disappointment, tiredness, or pleasure

similarity (n)
if two or more things have a similarity, they have features which are the same

sincerely (adv)
if you say or feel something sincerely, you really mean or feel it, and are not pretending

sneeze (v)
to suddenly take in your breath and then blow it down your nose noisily without being able to stop yourself, for example, because you have a cold

sob (v)
to cry in a noisy way, breathing in short breaths

stamp your foot (phr)
when you put your foot down very hard on the ground, usually because you are angry

steadily (adv)
in a calm, controlled way

steep (adj)
a slope that rises at a very sharp angle and is difficult to go up

stepmother (n)
the woman who has married your father after the death or divorce of your mother

stick a needle into (phr)
put a very thin and sharp piece of metal, used for sewing, into someone (it can be very painful!)

stockings (n)
items of women's clothing which fit closely over their feet and legs. Stockings are usually made of nylon and are held in place by garters.

stream (n)
a small, narrow river

suffering (n)
serious pain which someone feels in their body or their mind

suspect (n)
a person who the police think may be guilty of a crime

suspicious (adj)
something about a person which makes you think that they are involved in a crime or a dishonest activity

swear (v)
to promise that you are telling the truth about something

swollen (adj)
if a part of your body is swollen, it is larger and rounder than normal, usually as a result of injury or illness

syringe (n)
a small tube with a thin hollow needle at the end. Syringes are used for injecting drugs or for taking blood from your body.

tear (v)
if you tear paper, cloth, or another material, you pull it into two pieces or you pull it so that a hole appears in it

torture (v)
to deliberately cause another person terrible pain, in order to punish them or to make them reveal information

tremble (v)
to shake slightly because you are frightened or cold

twist (v)
move something into an unusual, uncomfortable, or bent position

twisted (adj)
if you describe a person as twisted, you dislike them because you think they are bad or mentally unbalanced

unbearable (adj)
if you describe something as unbearable, you mean that it is so unpleasant, painful, or upsetting that you feel unable to accept it or deal with it

vague (adj)
if you say someone is vague, you mean that they do not seem to be thinking clearly

vein (n)
one of the thin tubes in your body through which your blood flows toward your heart

version (n)
someone's own description of an event

victim (n)
someone who has been hurt or killed

wary (adj)
when you are cautious because you do not know much about someone or something and you believe they may be dangerous or cause problems

web (n)
the thin net made by a spider from a sticky substance that it produces in its body

wheezing (adj)
when someone breathes with difficulty and makes a whistling sound

whisper (v)
when you say something very quietly, using your breath rather than your throat, so that only one person can hear you

wind up (phr v)
when you turn a knob, key, or handle on a watch or a clock several times in order to make it operate

witness (n)
a person who saw an accident or crime

wrist (n)
the part of your body between your hand and your arm that bends when you move your hand

yard (n)
a unit of length equal to thirty-six inches or about one metre

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